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LOVE ON THE ADRIATIC

BY

H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

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LONDON
ERNEST BENN LIMITED

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Contents

I

"*There is a blue sea where the summer dwells——*"

Cazalet was forty years of age, yet he looked scarcely thirty, perhaps because he had still all his thirty-two teeth intact and sound, and the clear complexion that waits on good digestion, perhaps just because he was one of those casual and delightful people who refuse to be worried by trifles.

That much-abused word "charming" fitted him, quite. He was good-looking, graceful and, without being a dandy, always immaculately dressed—but that was not why dogs came to him led by instinct; cats and women too; women

who, up to this, however, had never brought him a sigh or a wrinkle—perhaps because he refused to be worried by trifles.

But the charm of this really delightful personality drew others also, beggars, begging letter writers, company promoters and city sharks.

The morning was lovely as he stood on the deck of the *Dubrovnik* waiting for her to cast off for the run down to Ragusa, and the broad harbour of Spalato lay like a sheet of emerald under the skies of May.

He had crossed the Adriatic from Venice, and he had gone to Venice for change and to get away from his worries. Yes, this man who refused to let trifles trouble him had found a trifle at last that would not be dismissed, a trifle in the form of a lawsuit that might involve almost his entire fortune. The case had to do with the affairs of a cinematograph company in which he had become involved, and it was on now before the Lords Justices of Appeal; he had nothing to do with the fighting of the case, only with the result, which might be declared at any moment. The whole thing was very unpleasant. He stood to lose thirty thousand pounds. In that event he would find himself possessed of only two hundred and fifty a year derivable from some farm-lands in Wilts, the furniture of his chambers in the Albany, and a circle of pitying but unhelpful friends. Also a mind stored with a fine selection of absolutely unuseful knowledge, and with a fine disinclination for business or trade.

The whole thing had shocked his old family lawyer, Percival Paradine, of Serjeants Inn, and Cazalet's reaction to the threat of ruin had formed part of the shock. It disturbed him, but it did not destroy his cheerfulness.

"Well, if the worst comes to the worst," said he, "they can't take my old prints—and I have no debts to speak of, and there's a cottage on Lanyon's farm I can have for next to nothing—but that's all in the the future, as Sophocles—wasn't it?—said; and, for the present, I'm going abroad for a month, to forget things. I have money in the bank, and I'm going to take two hundred and fifty. You can wire me the result of this beastly business, but that won't bring me back till I've had my holiday; perhaps it's the last I'll be able to afford for a long time."

"And where are you going?" asked the other.

"I'm going to wallow in the Adriatic. They have built a big bathing hotel at Kupari, a couple of miles south of Ragusa. Friend of mine has given me the tip. It's fairly cheap, and away from the travelling English. I'm running over to Venice, from there to Spalato and from there to Ragusa. Here's my Ragusa address," and Cazalet wrote the name of the hotel on a slip of paper.

"Going bathing!" grumbled the man of Law.

"Well, you know, I'm half a fish," said the other.

"Half a fool," was on Paradine's tongue, but he did not say it.

Anyhow, the morning was lovely. The Dinaric Alps set against the sky of May, presided over a world where there were no law courts, and Spalato harbour, all inshore green, was beginning to show the outshore blue between its piers as the *Dubrovnik* pushed across it.

It is good to sit on a deck-chair of an Adriatic steamer on a morning like this, and stretch your legs and smoke a cigar, and Cazalet did what was good. He generally did—except in business matters, and presently, down beside him sat a breezy and friendly German, with a taste for conversation in English.

He knew everything about the Adriatic, this German, the names of the islands, the names of the hills, the policies and politics of Dalmatia and Herzegovina, the luncheon hour on board, and the best wine to order.

Presently, noticing that some of the passengers were gathered at the starboard rail, he got up to see what was the matter, and Cazalet followed him. A small steamer was coming up towards them; its deck was crowded with people, and most of them seemed dancing; a fox-trot tune came across the water, and now, close up, a man dressed like an old-time pirate, could be seen waving a sword in salutation to the *Dubrovnik*.

"That," said the German, "is an Italian cinematograph company, they are always the same, making a noise. Either Italian or French—oh, they have been making some picture

down in the islands, and now they are making a picture of themselves for people to laugh at."

Cazalet went back to his seat. He was by nature superstitious, as all really nice people are, and he felt a bit disturbed by the question as to whether this was a good or bad omen for the success of the lawsuit. He honestly loathed everything to do with the cinema business, that had so flattened or threatened to flatten him out financially; the case was pending in the courts, and now, out here, he must come across this band of mountebanks whose gaiety against the background of his loathing seemed to have an ominous significance.

Absurd! Well, maybe, but, all the same, those mountebanks had left something behind them down in the islands, something fateful, that he was yet to find, and which you too will discover in the course of this most interesting story.

II

The *Dubrovnik* gave a hoot of her syren.

"Lissa," said the German. "We stop here ten minutes."

He went to the rail, and Cazalet followed him, to see the pretty island that they were floating towards across the

unruffled blue. For countless years it had sat there admiring itself in the glass of the Adriatic, but never had it seen itself more beautiful than to-day, purple-grey, maquis tinted, sun-washed, presenting shyly, as a mother presents a pretty child, its little town, christened Lissa, too; holding it so close to the water's edge that one might fancy the slightest earthquake shock sending the coloured houses and quaint hotel to follow their reflections into the sea.

A delicious perfume of violets and sun-warmed rosemary came on board, also a small barrel of olive oil and some hens in a crate; then an old Bavarian gentleman in a Tyrolean hat, lastly three others; a lady's maid carrying a purple morocco jewel case, and two ladies, one about eighteen, rather stout and fairly good-looking, the other perhaps twenty-eight, possibly thirty, dark and pale, with the aristocratic pallor of the north—and oh! Mary pity men! with a pair of the most lovely, languorous, mist-blue eyes.

Looking at this woman one said to oneself in a happy-unhappy sort of amazement: "Why, the very dogs must run after her, chasing each other to get in front and look up at those eyes."

But nothing came after her on board the *Dubrovnik*, only luggage, and the three women, jewel-case and all, went forward, dropped below, and vanished from view.

She had looked at Cazalet, with a half pause—a momentary lag in her glance; possibly she fancied that she had seen him before and ought to recognise him.

Yet it wasn't, somehow, a self-questioning look, there was nothing about it of any sort of consequence except the fact that it had lingered, perhaps, a split second too long.

Perhaps she always did it with men? No, she didn't seem that sort; then he forgot about her, as the German pointed out Curzola, far away on the port bow, an amethystine stain in the ultramarine distance.

He did not see her at luncheon; the *Dubrovnik* has several fine state-rooms, and probably she was having luncheon apart from the common crowd. Later in the day, skirting Meleda, he saw her forward seated with her companion, but coming into harbour at Gravosa, which is indeed the harbour of Ragusa, she had vanished as though she had never been—down below very likely, titivating herself before landing.

He got ashore with the friendly German, Schwartz by name, and they shared a taxi, with their luggage. Gravosa lies a couple of miles away from the town, and the bathing hotel at Kupari a couple of miles beyond that.

Schwartz got out at the town and called a porter to carry his luggage, for no wheeled vehicle is permitted beyond the gates of that happy little city; then, after an affectionate farewell with this good companion Cazalet drove on.

III

The *Fonicka* was her name, a green painted boat which he had hired by the week, picking her out from the others that were lying on the bathing beach because of her colour and handy size.

She had a small lug-sail, oars straight-cut almost as match-sticks, a locker for fishing lines, and a bait tub. But he did not fish. You don't want to fish or do anything else in a serious way on this bit of coast, at least during your first few days of it, especially if you are living at the Hotel.

You swim of a morning in the peacock-blue sea till you are drowsy, and then you sit on the sands and watch the Germans sun-bathing, the children playing, the Czechs flirting, and the far ships making up for Pola or down for Durazzo, or maybe Zante.

You know that only a little way down there lies Greece and the islands of Sappho; the sea-scented air is full of dreams.

Then, if you have provided yourself with a luncheon basket, packed as only the hotel knows how to pack a luncheon basket, with sardine sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, buttered rolls—enough for four—and a bottle of Chianti, you get into your boat and push out.

And now, if you have not forgotten your cigarettes, or—worse—matches, you are king of the whole world.

Away up there lies Ragusa, with the sun upon its battlements, and away out there lie Meleda and Lagosta, like

the Islands of the Blest. South, you can see the violet shadow where the sea dips beneath the six-hundred foot level, and to north-east the hills of Dalmatia watching it all as they have watched it since the days of Pan.

Cazalet this morning, the third day of his stay, had put out earlier than usual, but not for pleasure.

Last night he had received a cable, short but not sweet:

"*Regret adverse decision delivered this afternoon.*

Paradine."

So that was that.

He wanted to be alone to think the matter over. Despite his light-hearted way of looking at things, the blow had been severe.

Oh, it was all very well talking of living on two hundred and fifty a year in a cottage on Lanyon's farm; he had spoken in earnest, and he could do it, but—why, his subscription to the Senior Conservative Club was forty pounds a year, alone. That would have to go.

He had never been rich; a capital of thirty thousand these days is not much, just enough to live carefully on; still, he had never felt the pinch of restraint, as in fact his tastes had

been fairly simple. This was poverty. Not the poverty that means hunger and cold, but the poverty that means doing without things.

Actually up to this he had not reckoned the details of what he would be up against. He did so now, as he sat with oars pulled in, and the *Fonicka* drifting with the current, and every detail of the scenery talking to him.

How things talk to one when one is in trouble or perplexity; the pattern of the carpet, the picture on the wall, rubbing disagreeable facts in with never a word of comfort.

Ragusa was telling him that before the War a few hundred a year might have been made to stretch a long way, "but not now," said Ragusa. "Not now. See here, take whisky alone. You are very temperate and you don't like wine; the only thing you take is whisky in moderation. You once reckoned that a bottle would last you seven days. Well, at twelve and sixpence a bottle, that means about thirty pounds a year."

"About that cottage," said Lagosta, luxuriously swimming in the blue, "the country is lovely in spring, summer and autumn, but what about winter? What about January, February and March?"

"And the yokels," murmured far-off Curzola. "Delightful people at a distance, but how about close up—and the farmers, how about them? Take my advice and stick here; it's warm here, anyhow, and you could live cheap."

But the hotel had a word to say on that. "Not in me," said the hotel. "You'd have to find some awful rooms in a native house, or hire a hovel of some sort; yes, you could live in a way, no doubt, but you would be an exile—cut off, worse than Robinson Crusoe, for he had Man Friday—you have no one."

No one. That was the truth. Men, sometimes, never find out the real truth about themselves till they are driven into a corner.

He had lots of friends; men and women liked him; plenty of people would have rushed to open their purses for him if they fancied him absolutely broke, but, somehow, he was now alone in the world. Money he would take from no man, nor sympathy in his condition.

He had lived the easy, selfish life of a well-to-do bachelor; he had neither brothers nor sisters, wife nor children, he had cultivated all sorts of things, but never his heart; yet it was a good heart in its way, and that was, perhaps, why suddenly uncovered to the chill of loneliness, it felt the cold so acutely.

For the moment.

The spring of optimism which was the mainspring of his nature had been bent back during the night, during the morning, and now it was bent to the limit; it suddenly released itself. Things would come all right, somehow. There was time to turn round in. Why not something out East? Why not tea planting? His uncle, Arthur James Ponderbury, was in

the business, why not apply to him for a chance? He saw himself planting tea on the hills of Darjeeling, and living happily in a bungalow surrounded by books, and an atmosphere of Kipling, and the good-fellowship of other tea-planters.

He forgot that he was forty.

Behind Darjeeling, as behind a painted curtain, lay all sorts of other possibilities for the future, unviewable, but still felt to be there.

The black dog was off his back at last, that was the main thing, the peak of the crisis was past, and all the objects before him, from sunlit Ragusa to lovely Lagosta, ceased asking troublesome questions, and became themselves again.

He had said to Paradine that, come what might, he would not return till he had had his holiday, and that decision still held.

Raising the sail he made towards Ragusa, landed at the boat-slip there, and, leaving the *Fonicka* in charge of a waterman, went for a ramble in the little city, fed the pigeons in the square, and had luncheon in the little café at the corner of the square, quite forgetting that he had a luncheon basket in the boat, and when remembering it on his return to the slip, presenting the contents, plus the half-flask of Chianti, to the boat-keeper.

A nice prelude to life on two hundred and fifty a year!—however, and as things turned out, it was to be the prelude to

much more than that.

IV

Landing at the hotel beach a couple of hours later he saw a girl, it was the girl who had come on board the *Dubrovnik* at Lissa in company with the maid carrying the jewel-case, and the woman with the lovely eyes, those eyes that still remained in his memory despite everything. The girl had just landed in a canoe, and as he ran the *Fonicka* on to the sands, she was in the act of pulling the canoe above tide-mark.

He jumped out and helped her.

He had lost money and opportunity in life, but never an opportunity of this sort.

"Staying at the hotel?" he asked, after she had thanked him.

"Yes," said the girl. "We came this morning."

"I think I saw you on the boat the other day, as I was coming down from Spalato—you and——"

"Yes," said she, with a funny little laugh, as though she knew quite well what "you and——" meant. "We came on board at Lissa."

Though a cheerful seeming creature enough she had still, he fancied, a trace of the hang-dog hopelessness, as far as men are concerned, which characterises your woman under eclipse.

A woman may conquer mere plainness and bring men to her feet after the fashion of Pauline Metternich, but no woman can conquer the beauty that attracts all eyes away from her, and yet, human nature is so strange, she may feel no jealousy, she may even feel a sort of resigned admiration —for such is the magic of beauty.

She paid the boatman and they strolled back to the hotel, chatting as though they were full acquaintances, for such is the magic of a strange place, and the freedom from foolish constraint which is one of the best features in our modern life.

He did not see her at dinner, neither she nor the Other One. They had, in fact, a private suite, being evidently above associating with the common herd. But in the dance-hall that evening they suddenly appeared, and it came about that Cazalet danced with her—not the girl.

She smelt of violets, and when they released one another they sat for a while and talked, whilst her companion took the floor with a Yugo-Slavian gigolo.

"Are you staying here long?" he asked.

"Long," said she. "No, I don't think so, we just came on from Ragusa—didn't I see you on the boat at Lissa?"

"You did," said he, and fell dumb.

She glanced at him. His eyes were following the dancers, and one might have fancied that he had forgotten that she was beside him, but she knew better. Then the girl, released from the gigolo, came and sat beside them, and the séance broke up. The something that silence and propinquity seemed spinning between them snapped—or at least seemed to vanish, and she rose from her seat, bidding him good night, and retiring with her companion.

Cazalet went to the smoking-room.

He was up against something that he had never encountered before.

All sorts of women had attracted him for the moment at different times in his life, but none of them had quite reached the spot.

What was it about this woman? Oh, yes, of course, those eyes of hers—yes, but he wasn't a boy to be influenced like this by a pair of blue eyes. It was just herself. Her voice, the way she had talked to him.

They had said a good deal to each other besides the conversation recorded above, and her manner of talking had been something better than friendly: intimate.

She seemed to have sensed his character. With the attitude of an elder sister she had asked him questions about himself, she had a mothering tone in her voice.

All that helped no doubt in reaching the spot, but there was more.

There was the undiscovered something which makes a woman everything to a man, a man everything to a woman, and this something is not good looks, nor is it "sex appeal." What is it? No one knows anything about it, except the fact that when it presents itself it generally presents itself on sight.

Love at first sight was a favourite theme with the dear old Victorians. Well, they had the habit of talking sense very often.

But if you were to fancy Cazalet love-stricken and retiring to bed to dream of his inamorata, you would be imagining a vain thing. He retired from the smoking-room to the bar, where he had a Kirsch with a friendly Swede and a couple of even more friendly Yugo-Slavians—several Kirsches in fact, and when he retired to bed it was midnight, and his mind was rather in a mixed state about things in general and Balkan politics in particular. But she was there, somehow, fragrant, though unseen, like a bunch of violets in a twilit room.

V

He bathed before breakfast, and after breakfast, somewhere about eleven o'clock, coming down to the beach, there she was in the hotel garden, seated in a deck-chair with a canopy to it and reading *The Times*. It had evidently just arrived by post, for the torn wrapper lay beside her. Another deck-chair was placed close to her; evidently it belonged to the girl, who had gone back to the hotel for something, for beside it was propped a striped sunshade.

"Where are you going with the basket?" she asked, after they had said good morning.

"Beach," said he. "I've got a boat, and I generally go out in her when there's nothing else to do—may I sit down a moment?" He took his place in the empty chair and put the basket beside him. "I've got my luncheon in the basket," he said, following the direction of her gaze.

She laughed.

"Anyhow, you seem to have got enough," said she, measuring the basket's size. "It looks as if you had your dinner as well—and there's the neck of a bottle sticking out of it—Chianti?" She folded the paper in her lap and put it beside her. "I know, every hotel is exactly alike in their ideas about picnic baskets, and I'll tell you exactly what else there is." She half-closed her lovely eyes as though conjuring up the spirit of second sight. "There are two hard-boiled eggs wrapped in paper, there are sardine sandwiches, two buttered rolls—and no salt."

"There were yesterday," said he, "and I expect there will be to-day—let's look."

He took out the Chianti bottle and a glass.

"You're right," he said, delving and sniffing. "Only the sandwiches are wurst—I think, and there's an apple." Then suddenly, as he closed the basket again, and with that joyous and boyish frankness which was one of his pleasing characteristics: "I'll shoot the whole of the frightful lot back in the hotel if you'd like to come out for a little sail; you ought to see this place and Ragusa from the sea. If you and your—I mean, if you would both care to run up to Ragusa, I'd be delighted to take you, it's only a couple of miles."

"I'd love to," said she, "but I don't know about Miss Graham—she went back to the hotel for a book, but if you will wait I will ask her."

She rose and took the paper and her reading glasses and left him alone with his basket. He watched her till she vanished beyond the rosemary hedge that hid the hotel entrance, and then he waited.

Five minutes passed and produced nothing from the hotel but some children, a German with a shaven head, and a waiter carrying a tray of glasses.

Ten minutes—ah, there she was, alone!

"My friend is not coming," said she, "but if you like I will go out a little way with you—not to Ragusa but to see the coast—no, don't take the basket back, you may like to go

out again for your picnic when you land me—sure I'm not giving you too much trouble?"

"No," he said, "you're not." He was going to add "It's a pleasure," but the conventional banality of the phrase checked him. He was always somehow short and direct with her, he had a feeling somehow that she could read his thoughts, and when a man has a feeling like that about a woman, she very often can.

They reached the sands of the bathing beach, where the *Fonicka* was lying waiting for him. The basket went in, she followed and, helped by a boatman, he pushed the little craft out, jumping in just as the keel left the sand.

A light wind was blowing from the Islands. Lagosta had never looked more lovely, nor Ragusa more like a fairy-tale city; the far Dalmatian hills stood remote and peaceful against the blue, and the sail of the *Fonicka* taking the wind, the little craft began to move, heading out towards the horizon that hid far-off Italy.

"The further you get out the better it looks," said he. "There's Meleda, and you'll see Curzola in a minute just beyond it."

"And we'll see Italy soon, I should think, if we go much further out than this," said she. "Afraid! No. I am never afraid of the sea, go as far as you like. I'm content."

She was seated by the mast facing him, as there was not room for more than the steersman in the stern-sheets.

Fearless of the sun she had taken off her hat, and as she sat there holding her knees, the wind playing with her raven dark hair and her eyes fixed far away upon the Dalmatian hills, she formed a lovely picture. She was of the type that does not leave beauty behind; lovely perhaps as a child, lovely, surely, as a girl, she was even more lovely now, with the added charm that maturity brings to the Chosen. Even in old age she would be beautiful, for real beauty is indestructible, a thing of the mind and soul, not of the flesh.

A fleet of Portuguese men-of-war, each the size of a walnut shell, each with its purple sail set to the breeze and all blowing along merrily for the Straits of Otranto, caught her eye, and brought a smile to her lips, delightful as themselves. He watched them with her.

Sharing and enjoying a pretty sight like that brings two people closer together than even sharing a meal.

"Have you ever seen a real nautilus?" she asked.

"No," he said, "have you?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At Malaita in the Solomon Islands; it was floating on the surface of the bay like a boat made of pearl, and as we rowed up to it it sank, just leaving a train of bubbles."

"What were you doing in the Solomon Islands?"

"Yachting."

She spoke carelessly, as though she were speaking of Cowes.

The fact just came home to him that he did not know her name.

Why should he? He had only met her last night and this morning; they were almost strangers—but were they?

Somehow or another they seemed to have come strangely close together even from the first moment of meeting last night.

Farther back than that even.

He remembered how her eyes had met his at Lissa——

He did not know her name, or if she were married or not, yet strangely enough he knew the name of her companion, Miss Graham.

Yachting amongst the Solomon Islands—that was all he knew of her past.

But he knew a good deal about her mind.

He knew, for instance, that it had begun to dominate his, with that gentle tyranny which a woman of decision and high commonsense assumes over a male creature when she gets a grip of him and finds him unpractical—as so many of them are—and in need of mothering.

He knew that she had that blessed thing, a sense of humour, not the humour that laughs at a man pursuing his own hat, but the humour that can estimate little failings and troubles, according to their true proportions, and warm up the old hash of things we call life, day by day, so that it is at least eatable if not enjoyable.

A blessed gift.

Also he knew—or the guess was next door to knowledge—that she had a will of her own that would not be disputed. A will not expressed in those languorous, lovely mist-blue eyes—those were the bait.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked, seeing him sitting there mumchance, and his mind a thousand miles away.

He laughed.

"I was thinking what a fool that nautilus was."

"What nautilus?"

"The one that sank when it saw you coming."

Another man making a remark like that would have been quietly frozen, but he wasn't another man, and somehow the thing wasn't offensive. It seemed to amuse her.

"Cleverest thing it ever did," said she, "for they were getting out the boat-hook to hook it on board—and now, may I ask, do you know where we are drifting to?"

He followed her glance shorewards.

They were in the grip of the current that sets down towards Durazzo, and the hotel had become hidden by the little cape that juts out beyond it. Before he could answer her she pointed away down to the south-east.

"What's that?" she asked, pointing to a black point showing above the water.

He looked.

"That?" said he, "it's a bit of an old wreck, I think, hove up on a reef down there. I got it through the glasses the other day. I haven't brought them with me or you could see it. It looked like the stern-post and ribs of an old ship."

"How far is it?"

"Oh, only a couple of miles I should think."

"I'd like to see it." She glanced at her wristwatch. "I simply love wrecks—would there be time—I mean——"

"Of course there'd be time, bother time—and we have that luncheon basket—do you mind missing luncheon at the hotel?"

"Oh, not a bit," said she, "if they won't think we're drowned."

He shook out the sail, and as the warm wind from Lagosta filled it, steered south-east for the dark point that

seemed floating in the sea shimmer.

Sailing before the wind to the lift of a gentle swell is the nearest thing to soundless and effortless flight; a great gull came drifting over them, inspected them with its sharp eyes and drifted on to be lost, a point in the blue; patches of fucus they overtook and passed, and looking over the gunnel she could see in the hyaline blue, purple spotted jelly-fish and globes of sparkling jelly, and now, away to port, sure enough the Portuguese fleet, a purple patch; and all, fucus, jelly-fish, boat and brave men-of-war, part of the favouring wind and merry current setting down for Durazzo, Valona and the far Ionian sea.

VI

Then against the wind came voices—gulls!

They were clamouring round the reef and the wreck.

It is a meeting-place for the gulls, and often, with a glass, from the cape beyond the hotel, you can see them like a ring of smoke in the sky.

Yes, there was the wreck, sure enough; the ribs, the keel and the stern-post of a small ship, hove up evidently by some storm, and picked by some wrecking company of its spars and cargo.

Cazalet turned to his companion.

"Well," said he, "how do you like it?"

She did not answer for a moment, so absorbed was she in the sight before her.

They were only a cable length or so away from the reef edge, where the little waves were gurgling and spitting against the rocks.

"I don't like it," said she, "it depresses me. I think wrecks are best seen from a distance, but, anyhow, I'd like to land on the reef with it; can you get close enough, do you think?"

"I'll try," said he.

He brailed up the sail and, whilst she came into the stern sheets, went forward, and getting out the sculls pulled the *Fonicka* round the reef, finding on the eastern side a creek that seemed practicable. More, there was here a bit of sand protected by the two arms of the creek and offering a beaching place for the boat.

He helped his companion out and pulled the boat a bit up. Then they looked around them.

Now there was about this reef, this wreck, and the very sands on which they trod, a something vaguely repellent to the mind of Cazalet, and, also, he soon discovered, to the mind of his companion.

This something was not sinister and had nothing to do with tragedy, and it had for physical lines not the desolation of the wreck, but the condition of the sands. Cigarette cartons, chocolate cartons, and bits of old newspapers lay about, also empty bottles. The wind, as if ashamed of the whole business, had smoothed the sand where it had been trodden, and tried vainly to hide the old newspapers in the openings between the rocks—no use. The place shouted of Trippers. Hundreds of trippers must have been disporting themselves here, to judge by the remains, and the result was that sort of desolation which we associate with backyards and ash dumps. The gulls, resenting the presence of the new intruders, had flown away, making for the rocks that lie a quarter of a mile inshore.

"Maybe they think we are trippers," said she. "Well, so we are, aren't we—anyhow, let's forget about it and fancy ourselves castaways, and—I'm beginning to feel hungry."

He had taken the basket from the boat, and they opened it and set to, seated beside each other on the sand, the basket between them.

He uncorked the Chianti. She would not have any, but she took the apple.

As they were finishing their meal a strip of celluloid blowing about on the sand drew his attention. He picked it up and looked at it, then he rose and looked at the wreck. Then, climbing over the rocks he came towards it, walked round it, and examined it carefully.

She heard him laugh. Then came his voice:

"It's a dud."

"A what?"

"Come and look!"

She came across the rocks.

"It's a dud. Some beastly cinematograph company put it up—see." He pointed to a strip of paper with printing on it pasted to one of the timbers. "Cine Vitoria, Roma," read the writing. But it did not want that. The fact was evident that these timbers had never floated in the form of a ship. They were new, roughly black-painted, roughly put together, and evidently left to save the expense of carting them away. The riddle of the sands was explained; the cigarette boxes, chocolate cartons and empty bottles. She saw it all at once, but she could not see the joke. He was laughing, caught all of a sudden as if by some humorous idea revealed to him, hidden from her.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It's me—everything—I can't get away from cinema companies—come along back and I'll tell you."

She followed him back, and they sat down by the basket, and lit cigarettes.

"Go on," she said, "I want to know what you were laughing at."

"It was the wreck."

"You said it was you."

"So it is. I'm a wreck, wrecked by a cinematograph company."

She looked at him, but he had only had half a glass of Chianti, and he did not look as though he had gone mad.

"Yes?"

"It's only just that nearly all my money got tangled up in a company, and the whole lot of it's nearly gone—so I came down here for a holiday——"

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but do I understand that you have lost all your money, and that because of that you have taken a holiday?"

"Yes."

"But why a holiday?"

"Why? To get away from things."

"What things?"

"Oh, lawyers and worry. Besides, when I started I wasn't sure—that's to say, dead sure, about the business. There was an action coming on, and I told my lawyer to send me a cable about the result, and he's sent it. It's lost."

"The action?"

"Yes, the action and money and everything."

"Good heavens!"

"The funny thing was, that coming out of Spalato on the way down here, the first thing I struck was a cinematograph company coming up in a steamer, the same crowd, I expect, that left this thing here. I suppose I'm superstitious, but I felt, somehow, that it was a sort of omen—couldn't tell whether it was lucky or not, but it wasn't—and now, look, this comes on top of everything."

"Well, maybe," said she, "it means your bad luck is ended."

"Maybe," said he, doubtfully, lighting another cigarette.

She glanced at him curiously.

"What made you do it?" she asked.

"Which?"

"Speculate with your money, for I suppose it was a speculation?"

"Well, it wasn't exactly that. It seemed a sure thing, and I got deeper and deeper into it, put more and more money in, that is what did me."

"You talk as if it was a bog," said she, "that you had walked into by accident. Didn't someone lead you?"

"Well, a man called Rosenbaum put me on to the business."

"I thought it was something like that," said she.

"Why, do you know him?"

"No, but I can fancy him—is he still a friend of yours?"

"Oh yes, there's nothing wrong with old Rosy. I don't mean he's a what d'you call it? friend; just a business friend, a city man, and before this deal he put me in the way of making several hundreds."

"They always do," she murmured as if to herself. Then to him: "You don't mind my questioning you, do you?"

"Mind!"

"Well, then, I know a good deal about business matters. I don't want to libel Mr. Rosenbaum, but do you think, apart from there being nothing wrong with him, that there is any possibility of his having swindled you in any way?"

"Him? No—Oh no. Paradine, my lawyer, never hinted at that, besides, he lost money himself over the company."

"What's his address?"

"Paradine's?"

"No, Mr. Rosenbaum's."

"Old Broad Street. Why?"

"I only wanted to know; I've got a habit of wanting to know where people live. Where do *you* live?"

"The Albany—and now you have my address but not my name. Funny, isn't it, we know each other so well—and yet you don't know my name. My name is——"

"Cazalet," said she.

"Why, how on earth did you know it?"

"Quite simply. I looked in the hotel list this morning. You must have come just before us, and all the rest were foreign names right away back—there was Drimel, Schmidhorst, Blom, Dragomanovitch, Beza, Schneider, Schultz, Stultz, Blumberg—you aren't Mr. Blumberg?"

"No, I'm Cazalet right enough, but how do you remember all those names?"

"I never forget anything," said she, and it came to Cazalet that this was no ordinary woman.

Since she had taken him in hand over this matter, she had established a queer sort of ascendancy over him. He almost resented it, not on his own account but hers.

Those lovely eyes, that face, were the last things one would have dreamed of associating with the word "business,"

yet she had made him feel almost as he had felt when under cross-examination by Paradine. He was quite unconscious of the fact that she was a millionaire twice over, that she brought to the handling of her money the intelligence, quickness of thought and memory, that some women bring to the bridge-table, and that as a result of all this, her knowledge of men and things was wide and peculiar.

To know men you must get to know them as business men, even if the knowledge is sometimes painful. Perhaps it was Cazalet's utterly unbusinesslike qualities that partly drew him to her—that and himself.

"By the way," said she, after a moment's pause. "What is Mr. Rosenbaum's business?"

"He's partner in a firm of stockbrokers," replied Cazalet. "Rosenbaum and Mandelberg."

"Jews," said she. "Well, there's nothing wrong in that. Jews are just as straight as Christians, sometimes straighter—now let's forget them. Do you mind my asking something else?"

"Do I mind?"

"Well—now that you are like this—and when, of course, you have finished your holiday, have you any plans?"

"Lots."

"What are they?"

"Well—oh, well, I've been thinking of going in for tea-planting. I have a relative in the business. I'm not entirely done. I have some land in Wiltshire that will bring in a couple of hundred a year, and I can sell it——" He was leaning on his elbow. Then, looking up at her:

"It's awfully funny my telling you all my affairs—boring you with them——"

"Not a bit," she cut in. "I'm as inquisitive as a mongoose about other people, and now let us forget affairs and pack the basket—gracious!" she looked at her watch, "it's nearly three o'clock."

He stuffed the Chianti flask, the remains of the food and the waste-paper back into the basket and fastened it. Although they might be trippers, they would not be littery ones. Then they pushed out, and running the sail up, he laid the *Fonicka* on the starboard tack for the run back against the wind to the hotel.

When he parted from her in the hall he lit a cigarette, and going to the reception desk asked for the hotel register.

The strange thing was, that though she had looked out his name that morning, he had not looked out hers.

Women are quicker in some things than men, especially things like these. He opened the register, and there they were, sure enough, Mrs. Fanshawe, Miss Graham.

Mrs. She was married then! Well, what did it matter?

Cazalet had seemed to take his money losses lightly. He was the sort of man who would take even the loss of blood lightly.

But be as light-hearted as you may, after a severe hæmorrhage the system tells the tale.

This woman had fascinated him absolutely.

When love comes to a man at forty it comes in earnest. All the same, there was no business to be done in this case. Cazalet was out of the game.

The subconscious sense of poverty was like a paralysing disease affecting the ambition centres, anyhow the centre that presides over the affairs of the heart.

If he had anything to do with this woman he would have to make her his own entirely—and he had no money. She was well-to-do, evidently, and somehow he felt, as though made aware of the fact by some instinct, that she was free in the sense that implies widowhood or divorce.

That altered nothing. He was a beggar in a social sense—diseased.

All the same, on looking up her name, he had dwelt on her handwriting, distinctive as her mind—it seemed part of herself. He could have kissed it, might have, only that the German reception clerk was looking.

VII

Mrs. Fanshawe, having parted with him, came down the corridor that led to her suite.

In the sitting-room, a pleasant room that opened on the sea-front, she found the Graham girl, busy with a typewriter; several letters which she had got ready for post were lying on the table.

As companion-secretary to the lady of the eyes, she found her work cut out for her in both capacities, but she never grumbled.

As she looked up now she saw that her companionate functions were about to be required of her, and she turned from the table.

"Well, you have been a time," said she. "I was beginning to be afraid you and he had got drowned. Have you had tea?"

"No," replied the other. "Ring for it. We sailed down to look at an old wreck on a reef, and we had luncheon there—he'd brought a basket. What have you been doing?"

"These letters—well?"

"Oh, my dear, he's mad, quite mad!"

"Mad!"

"Not nastily mad—just mad. Tea!" to the waiter who answered the bell. Then, wheeling up an armchair, she took her place near the other.

"Only just mad," said the secretary, "how? Did he proclaim himself the Emperor of Abyssinia, or what?"

"Worse than that."

"Asked you to be Empress?"

"No—he just showed himself as he was—fancy, he's lost all his money, and the first thing he did, when the crash came the other day, was to come here for a holiday—a holiday."

"Well, he might have done madder things than that," said the other; "for instance——"

"I know—but it's the irresponsibility; he's like a child—he's got a green painted boat."

"I've seen it; he was bringing it in yesterday when I met him—well, what else would you have him do on his holiday—run about with a hoop?"

The other did not reply. She seemed brooding. Then when tea was brought in and poured out she opened up again.

"I think a barrier ought to be put round the city, and certain sorts of people barred out—anyhow, from the Stock Exchange."

"It wouldn't be any use," said the girl. "They'd make fools of themselves over the telephone—a fool and his money are soon parted."

"He's not a fool."

"Well, anyhow, he's parted from his money—how did he do it?"

"That," said Mrs. Fanshawe, "is what I am going to find out, or, at least, what I am going to get Levison and Levison to find out for me as far as they can. From what he told me, the thing seems all right. He invested, or rather, allowed his money to be invested in a cinema company."

"All of it?"

"Well, nearly all."

"You were right about the madness. Go on."

"The man who got him to invest is named Rosenbaum of Rosenbaum and Mandelberg, stockbrokers, of Old Broad Street."

"What was the name of the company?"

"The United Empire."

"It all sounds dreadful," said the girl. "Doesn't it? Him playing about and caught by people like that—he has been caught right enough. No stockbroker ought to let a client

plunge in that way—and cinematograph companies of all things in the world! What are you going to do about it?"

"Do," said the other grimly, "nothing. Levison and Levison will do all there is to be done."

"Have you told him you are going to set them to work?"

"No."

"Why?"

The other did not answer for a moment. She got up and stood looking out of the window. Cazalet was right in his instinct. She had not a husband. He was dead. He had been a shipping magnate, and three years of married life with him had left her a widow with a determination never to marry again. He was so bad that he had left her with a distaste even for the money that had come to her from him. No more men. And yet, when she had stepped on to the boat at Lissa the other day, and when her eyes had met Cazalet's—well, what was it?

Who can tell?

Perhaps she had recognised by intuition the absolute antithesis of the brute she had been miserable with. Women have these instincts. However, the result was there, she had thought of him.

It is a curious fact that fellow-travellers impress themselves more on the mind than the ordinary people we meet with. She thought of him that night as something apart

from the trivial memories of the day, and then she forgot him, or fancied so, till she came upon him here in the hotel. Then something had sprung up in her mind, just as though a seed had been dropped there that had been growing in the dark. She had danced with him—then to-day.

And now the Graham girl was asking her why she had not told him that she was mixing in his affairs, so as to try if possible to see him righted if he had been wronged. Well, she could not tell him, because she was mixing in his affairs for the very simple reason that she had taken more than a fancy for him.

She could not tell him that. She could not let it be hinted at; anything she did to try and free him from his financial position, or even to find out the truth about it, must be done in secrecy.

Instead of answering Miss Graham she gave an order.

"Get ready to take down a letter."

Then, when the secretary, converted into a stenographer, sat tapping her teeth with a pencil, and waiting for dictation, the employer having reviewed the position in all its bearings, turned from the window and began to dictate:

"*To Messrs. Levison and Levison,*
Solicitors, 20, Serjeants Inn,
Fleet Street,"

began the letter, which went on:

"*Dear Mr. Levison*,

I want your very special help on behalf of a friend—"

"Friend," said the stenographer, finishing the sentence and repeating the last word. Then she waited for the other to continue.

VIII

Cazalet, unconscious of what was brewing on his behalf, dined that night in rather a melancholy mood.

She did not appear in the dance hall as she had done on the previous night, nor was there any sign of Miss Graham. This fact did not help to cheer him.

In the old books and plays, melancholy was the favourite wear of your lover.

There was something in the idea. Even in these days of jazz, a man in love does not imply a man in high spirits—especially if he knows that what he wants is out of the question.

His tragic position as regards the money market was a barrier to love. Not a brick wall, but just a barbed-wire barrier, unclimbable by love, but easily shot through.

As a result, for the next few days, the unfortunate man, though refusing to acknowledge or look at the bowman, was incessantly picking the arrows out of himself. He often met her in the grounds or on the beach, but somehow the companion-secretary was nearly always present. There were no more heart-to-heart companionate talks like that which they had held in the shadow of the dud wreck. She seemed to have forgotten all about that, and the interest which she had taken in his affairs, but in one thing she had not altered—her friendliness.

Then came a lot of pleasant English people to the hotel, displacing Germans and Slavs, and bathing and boating parties and excursions to Lacroma and Cattaro, in which they were all mixed up, helped to distract him, as noise helps to distract the attention from the small, still voices of conscience or concealed worry—without, however, destroying them.

Several weeks passed like this, weeks during which he had picked up by accident from one of the English visitors two facts equally disturbing. Mrs. Fanshawe was a widow, also she was "immensely rich."

IX

One bright morning Mrs. Fanshawe, who had received a cablegram the night before, the last of many that had been coming to her during the previous days, got quietly into the hotel omnibus and started for Ragusa, by that switchback road which all who have travelled will remember. She did not take the Graham girl with her.

"I'd love to see him," said the girl.

"Well, you can't," replied the other. "Just stay here and content yourself with thinking about him."

Arrived at Ragusa, she passed through the gates, and found the *Stradone* passing along it, till she reached the square; here she paused for a moment to look at the pigeons, and then, taking a lane that led to a flight of steps, she reached the little hotel that calls itself the "Lion and the Lamb."

The "Lion and the Lamb" has potted palms growing by the little balustrade across which it peeps at the sea; it is kept by an Italian and frequented rarely by English folk. That is perhaps why she had chosen it as a rendezvous with the mysterious person that the Graham girl was so anxious to see.

The hotel is entered by a side door that gives on to the steps, and when she came into the little entrance hall the manager was in the office going over some books.

She asked had Mr. Rosenbaum arrived?

Yes, a gentleman of that name had arrived on the previous night, and was now in the salon; he was expecting a visitor, would Madame follow.

Leading her himself he crossed the hall, opened the door of a pleasant little room furnished with cane chairs and tables, Dela Robia china, a writing table, and four spittoons!

It opened on to the sunlit terrace by French windows, and the windows were open.

Seated at the writing table was a little man with glossy jet black curly hair, a hooked nose and gold spectacles.

He looked round at the opening of the door, and seeing the manager showing the lady in, rose, knowing that she must be the person he expected, and with his hand on the back of his chair, bowed.

"Mr. Rosenbaum?" said she.

He bowed again, and the manager closed the door on them.

Summoned by the Monte Cristoesque powers of wealth which this woman wielded, he had come from England, most of the way by air. Her name was as well known in the city as the name of Drexel or Gunderman. The vast fortune left her by her husband had not been decreased by rumour, and at the urgent call to Ragusa which meant big business of some sort he had literally flown to answer it. The only thing that

astonished him, and had astonished him on his arrival, was the place of rendezvous—a little hotel like this!

"Yes, Madame," said he. "My name is Rosenbaum, and I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to Mrs. Fanshawe."

She bowed.

"Let us sit down," said she. "I have brought you a long journey I am afraid, but it is to speak to you on a most important matter. I might have deputed my business man in London to take the thing specially up with you, but I preferred to act myself. Messrs. Rosenbaum have acted, I think, for a gentleman named Cazalet who is a friend of mine."

Rosenbaum inclined his head.

"He lost a great deal of money just recently in the Empire Cinematograph Company, whose shares he bought at a high price. I understand that these shares are now valueless owing to an action at law recently decided against the company."

Rosenbaum inclined his head again, but very slightly. What on earth did all this mean? Was it to answer questions like this that he had been hauled—or rather, made to fly—from London to Ragusa? However, he said nothing. Rosenbaum had three excellent maxims. Never say anything, never write anything, never burn anything; maxims that if followed by the public would leave the judges of the High Court with their business halved.

"As a result," went on the other, "Mr. Cazalet has been ruined."

Rosenbaum raised his eyebrows as if to say "Well?"

"You were his stockbroker, Mr. Rosenbaum. Do you think it was wise, or indeed fair, to let him involve himself like this in a company of that kind?"

"Now sit still, Rosy," said a voice inside Mr. Rosenbaum's skull, "this is a dangerous woman and she's after something."

"I beg your pardon?" said he, as though doubting what his ears had heard.

She repeated the question. Then he spoke, and he spoke with the amazement of a surprised child.

"But, Madame," said he, "there is no question of fairness in this business; Mr. Cazalet wished to buy this stock. Certainly he invested a large sum of money, but how could we tell that he had invested all his money, as you seem to imply. Now on the question of the wisdom of the business, you are right."

"I am glad to hear that."

"A moment. It would have been most unwise to have allowed Mr. Cazalet to put his money in these shares if we had had the slightest idea that the company was unsound—on the contrary, we had money of our own invested in it."

"That is just what I am coming to," replied the widow of the shipping magnate. "You had shares in this company, fifteen thousand one-pound shares; you sold them at forty shillings a share—no, I am wrong, you sold them in two lots, one at thirty-eight shillings a share, the other at forty-two, and you sold them to Mr. Cazalet. He did not know who the seller was, they were, I think, in Mr. Mandelberg's name. There is nothing wrong in selling shares, Mr. Rosenbaum. If you have shares in a company, and you suddenly have reason to suspect its soundness, there is nothing legally wrong in selling your shares to another person, *only*, the Committee of the Stock Exchange does not approve of such an action on the part of a broker."

"I don't in the least know what you are talking about," said Mr. Rosenbaum, assuming the tactics of the turtle that hides itself in the mud.

She smiled:

"Mr. Rosenbaum, I have agents who can find out anything I want them to find out except, perhaps, the intentions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in framing his Budget, so we will leave the matter at that. I don't want to press you, Mr. Rosenbaum."

"Still I am at a loss," said Mr. Rosenbaum, as though still unrecovered from his original amazement.

She was beginning rather to like him.

"You need not be at a loss over this matter," said she, "I am not the person to use a discovered secret to the detriment of another, especially a good man like you."

He bowed slightly.

"For it seems," said she, "and this is a matter known only to you and to me, that, regretting the great loss Mr. Cazalet had suffered, you put a thousand pounds for him into a venture in cotton—shall we say, with the result that he has cleared a big profit. In fact he has made thirty thousand pounds. That thirty thousand pounds is lying, somehow or another, in my bank, Mr. Rosenbaum."

"Yes?" said Mr. Rosenbaum.

"It belongs to Mr. Cazalet—all except the thousand which you ventured for him, and which is yours."

"A thousand pounds?"

"Yes, to draw when you choose. I can give you a cheque for it now."

"Still I am at a loss."

"Oh, don't be a fool," suddenly broke out the lady, losing patience and dropping circumlocution. "I want Mr. Cazalet to have his money back—thirty thousand pounds is nothing to me compared to the ruin of a good man. I can't offer him the money. Can you see *that*?"

"Yes, yes."

"I'm glad you can see something—well, I am going to order my solicitors, Messrs. Levison and Levison, to put the money in the hands of your solicitors, whoever they are, to be placed to Mr. Cazalet's account in their bank—twenty-nine thousand pounds, it ought to be thirty, but I have to pay you a thousand, and, anyhow, Mr. Cazalet deserves to lose a thousand for his stupidity. Is that quite clear?"

"Quite, quite! quite! quite!"

"Don't rub your hands—I haven't finished. You have still to earn your money."

"Ah!"

"Yes. You have still to see Mr. Cazalet and make him believe this improbable story of your generosity, in speculating a thousand for him, making him twenty-nine thousand—and not sticking to it."

"Yes," said Mr. Rosenbaum, with the face of a man who has suddenly come across a snag.

"Don't be depressed. *Fortunately* he is not a business man, and he is something better than that, a good man, a really good man, simple as a child."

Rosenbaum brightened visibly. It *is* so delightful sometimes to come upon goodness and simplicity in this wicked world.

"There is one thing more," she went on. "My name must never appear in this matter, that is essential."

"Quite."

"Mr. Cazalet is at Kupari," she finished, "and you must see him to-day. I will explain everything you must do. It is now after twelve o'clock; perhaps you will have luncheon with me here."

"Thanks," said Rosenbaum.

X

The Graham girl had not been left behind at Kupari for nothing. She was up to her eyes in the simple little plot of her employer, for the betterment of a good man, or rather for his restoration from ruin, but in her heart of hearts she knew that benevolence, though an active factor in this scheme, was not its mainspring. Her employer wanted this good man for her own, and she wanted him with his self-respect intact.

A man practically broke to the world is no mate for a rich woman; more than that, this special man, in his present financial condition, would have nothing to do with such a proposition, much as he might care for the woman. And he cared for her, she knew that.

Everything worth saying in love is said without words, had been said perhaps in that first momentary glance at Lissa.

This being so she had no hesitation at all in carrying out her scheme. The fine instinct that told her he had been "done" had not betrayed her. She could have made Rosenbaum return the thirty thousand, or else have made things very unpleasant for his firm, but her hand was too soft for the squeezing of scoundrels; besides, it pleased her better that the salvage money of this dear wreck should be hers.

To give to those we love is the pious instinct of the pelican, no less pious in the woman. So let us forgive her if mixed with her piety there was just a grain of deceit.

To return to the Graham girl.

She had been left at Kupari to head the game off should some accident lead it to Ragusa.

The Ancients had gods presiding over all sorts of things, but I don't think they provided a deity for Accident. He is there all right, in his works, at all events, but he was not at Kupari that morning. Cazalet had no promptings to go to Ragusa. He played tennis all the morning with some of the English visitors, and after luncheon he was preparing to go out in the boat when the game-warden appeared on the beach, for boats can take people to Ragusa.

"Where are you going to?" asked she.

"Oh, just for a sail," he replied. "Would you care to come?" If he had not suggested the idea she would have done so, and pushing off he headed in the direction of Lacroma.

He did not enquire after her companion, nor did he talk much. As a matter of fact his mind was under the cloud of impending departure.

He had told himself several times during the last day or two that it was getting time to quit and find some work to do. He had already determined to sell the farm-lands and push into something with the capital; there was no use at all in that idea of a country life in a cottage on a tiny income. No, he would realise and risk everything on a venture; sink or swim.

Meanwhile, he had to break off from all this pleasant life and take his departure—and as for her—well, it didn't do to think about that. Some time perhaps in the future and if he made good—who could say?—but not now.

The thing he was up against was no sentimental barrier, no question of false pride saying "You are poor and she is rich." He was up against the brick wall of the fact that to marry this woman would mean living at her rate of expenditure, or, at least, living at a rate absolutely impossible to him now.

She would have to pay his tailors' bills, and give him the money for the hundred little expenses inseparable from the life of the well-to-do—make him an allowance.

He would have preferred selling matches for his living, like the old man he had seen sitting at the gate of Ragusa.

Meanwhile, and at the moment, he was steering the *Fonicka* towards Lacroma. The wind was light, and tending

to vary from west to sou'-west, falling sometimes almost to a dead calm as they turned the boat for the homeward run, so that it was after five o'clock when they ran in to the bathing beach.

He remained behind to look after the tackle in the boat, whilst the girl made her way back to the hotel. Then, having finished his business, and spoken a few words to the boatmen, he followed her.

The hotel garden was almost deserted, and taking a seat in one of the basket chairs that were set about, he stretched his legs and lit a cigarette.

The sun sinking towards far-off Italy cast the long shadows of the palm trees almost to his feet, from some villa near by came the far faint strumming of a mandoline through the warm sea-scented air.

How pleasant life was just for this moment. Was it possible that in the same world existed Fleet Street, the Strand and all the sordid worries that seemed to swarm round Serjeants Inn and the bald head of Paradine?

Some Dutch children came running out of the hotel, three of them, one dragging a little cart, a gay and happy little crowd whose gaiety and happiness, however, seemed to strike a discordant note. They had no worries.

Then came out a melancholy-looking Swede, smoking a long thin cigar. One of those cigars with a straw in its centre,

that with a little management can last your careful smoker an hour.

The Swede, looking round at the lovely evening, noted the man in the chair, and avoiding him, sauntered along by a by-path towards the bathing beach.

Presently came out a little fat man, a new arrival evidently, for Cazalet had not seen him before.

He looked about him, then up at the building as though estimating its size and cost, as probably he was. Then, with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and a cigar between his teeth, he came along the path. He had seen Cazalet and was coming straight towards him.

He wore gold-rimmed spectacles. Why, surely—of all people in the world—Rosenbaum!!

XI

"Hullo, hullo," said Cazalet.

"Ah, there you are," said Rosenbaum. "I have been looking for you."

This statement, together with the apparition, almost took Cazalet's breath away. This indeed was the sort of stuff that

dreams are made of. But Rosenbaum was no dream.

"I've come right out from England to find you," said Rosenbaum, "and here we are; let us sit down. Things have been happening."

"Good God!" said Cazalet. "What's up *now*?"

Rosenbaum let himself down into one of the creaking basket-chairs. "Nothing wrong," said he. "Nothing bad, everything good. Sit down."

Cazalet sat down.

"I have been working for you," said the other, "and I have pulled things through—you remember those shares?"

"Which?"

"The Empire——"

"Yes?"

"Well, my friend, they should not have been sold to you."

"How?"

Rosenbaum shrugged his shoulders. The cotton speculation suggested by Mrs. Fanshawe had been turned down by him with her consent. This was his own idea. There is nothing like truth.

"It is not a question of how," said Rosenbaum, "it is just a statement I am making to you. I have discovered that the parties who sold those shares should not have sold them at that price. The consequence is, I have come to tell you the contract is annulled."

"Which?"

"The bargain is nullified, and your money will be returned to you."

"My money?"

"Yes."

"The money I have lost in those shares?"

"Yes."

"Why, good lord, man," cried Cazalet, "that means that I am——"

"Just as you were before you bought them—no, a thousand less, which is being taken in expenses. Twenty-nine thousand pounds is the amount, and it is being paid into the hands of my solicitors on your account."

It was not till now that Cazalet knew the position from which he had been saved.

At the bottom of the pit, looking up, he had seen the sky, and stars and Hope looking down at him. Hope and all her fantastic attendants so full of promises and suggestions.

At the top of the pit, now, and looking down, he saw its blackness, and the unclimbable nature of its walls, for a man of his sort who had never been used to climbing.

And beside him was little Rosenbaum, who had saved him from that horror!

"There is only one thing I would say," said Rosenbaum. "You must not ask the names of these people from whom you have recovered your money; that was stipulated."

Names! He didn't want any names. The name of the man who had saved him was all he wanted, and that name was Rosenbaum. Do you wonder at his enthusiasm for a man who had worked for his interest like that, and come out all the way here to Ragusa to bring him the good news?

"Oh, it is nothing," said the newsbearer. "I had to go to Venice in any case, and so I just came on here. It is better to explain these things in a personal interview than in a letter. Never write anything, my friend, that you can say by word of mouth, and never say anything by word of mouth in the presence of a witness—that is to say, of course, business matters, and unless he is your witness, if the other party is fool enough not to object. Well! Well! Well! What a pretty place we have here, a going concern, too, I should think. Is it a company, or private owned?"

"I don't know—by the way, how did you find I was here—they told you at the Albany, I suppose?"

"I expect that was how," said the other. "I just asked my partner to see if you were in town, and he told me you were here. Then, when I had finished my business in Venice, I just ran on down here to see you. I must be getting back to-morrow morning by the boat for Venice that leaves at ten o'clock."

"Can't you stay on as my guest for a day or two?"

"No," said Rosenbaum, "I've been too long away as it is, otherwise I should be glad."

"There's a thing that worries me," went on the other, "the —your expenses."

"Oh, don't you worry about that," replied Rosenbaum. "I have charged you a commission on the money returned to you, and the expenses are covered by that."

"Well, anyhow, we'll have a jolly good dinner to-night, and you'll be my guest. Come on in and have a cocktail."

At half-past seven—Mrs. Fanshawe, if she had not been dining in her own suite, might have seen the pair of them in the *salle-à-manger* seated at table opposite one another, a champagne bottle in an ice-pail was also of the party, whose note was decidedly one of cheerfulness.

Rosenbaum was just as cheerful as the other, business was over and he could enjoy himself; he had done well, all things considered, and he was pleased with Cazalet's delight. Cazalet's unbounding gratitude was also pleasant. Actually, and without the least hypocrisy, Rosenbaum accepted it, and,

such an extraordinary thing is mind, especially the mind of a Rosenbaum warmed with good champagne, not only did he accept it, but also he found in it a sort of stirring stick for his benevolence.

He felt benevolent.

It is the greatest mistake in the world to suppose that a man capable of a shady business deal is incapable of a good action, especially if he can do it for nothing, or that the pleasure of such an action is less for him than for a man of rectitude.

Anyhow, Rosenbaum felt benevolent, and the feeling pleased him, and continued with him into the smoking-room. Nor was it decreased by two fat cigars, liqueurs, and other things.

When Mrs. Fanshawe returned that afternoon to the hotel she found her companion and secretary just come in from her sail to Lacroma.

"Well, I've done it," said she.

"Have you made him disgorge?"

"Yes."

"You are wonderful," said the Graham girl, "and is he coming here to see Mr. Cazalet?"

"Yes."

"That won't be a very pleasant interview—for him."

"Oh, it will be all right," said Mrs. Fanshawe. "I have saved his *amour propre*. He is going to tell a story of how he got the money back from the firm that sold the shares—ring for tea, will you?"

She went off to her room to change.

Never a word had she said of the inwardness of the deal, of the fact that the money to be returned was her money.

Much as she trusted her secretary, this was a secret to be revealed to no one. It was no one's concern, either. She had given as much to the founding of a hospital last year, and given it anonymously, this was the same sort of thing, only it was the founding of a happiness—at least she hoped so.

Anyhow, it had nothing to do with anyone or anything but herself and her wealth.

That wealth had not been an unmixed joy. Those millions spread out in gilt-edged securities and carefully tended, had a power of growing that not even super-tax could destroy.

She tended them carefully because it was in her nature to be careful of her own interests, and the interests of others, and all her care and attention had resulted in what? the production of more money.

Now when you have more money than you can possibly want you want nothing. Everything is yours, and so the power of wishing for things vanishes. You don't wish for the diamond necklace in your jewel-case. If it is in a jeweller's shop window you don't wish for it either—it is yours. She had lost the power of wishing for things till she met Cazalet, money seemed some use at last, and so she used it. She wanted to buy his happiness back for him, and this transaction was not a thing to talk of or disclose even to himself, for there was also the factor that in buying happiness for him she wished to buy it for herself.

She had fancied that possibly after his interview with Rosenbaum he would come running to tell her of his good fortune.

Forgetting, for the moment, that he knew nothing of her connection with the matter.

Then she remembered this. All the same, she was anxious to know how things were going, and at half-past ten o'clock that night she sent her companion to see what was to be seen and in a quarter of an hour she returned.

"They were smoking in the lounge," said she, "and they've now gone up to their rooms. I saw them bidding each other good night—Mr. Rosenbaum is a little man with gold spectacles, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, he had his arm half round Mr. Cazalet, and there they stood shaking hands as though they would never stop—I can't understand it."

"What?"

"Well, if Mr. Rosenbaum has been disgorging money he's as good as stolen from Mr. Cazalet, why all this sentiment?"

"I expect he has made up some story to save his face," said the other. "I did not tie him down to any particular line of action. The restitution of the money is the great thing."

All the same she wished that Cazalet had sought her out that night to tell her of his good fortune. Even though he knew nothing of her hand in the matter he had given her all the intimate details of his affairs—and besides—besides—well, if a man really loves a woman, and if he is suddenly saved from disaster, does he not seek her out at once and give her the good news. Well, however that might be, he would not come to see her to-night, for even the dance music below had ceased, and the hotel was closing its doors.

XII

Cazalet awoke in the highest spirits next morning. The sun was shining in through the open window, and with the sunshine came the sound and the scent of the sea.

Actually, till Rosenbaum had brought him salvation yesterday evening, he had not realised to the full his position, the realisation and the sense of salvation had come to him as a double shock, throwing his mind into a turmoil, and creating a plexus of ideas amidst which the idea of love had little part. He was free, saved from a monster that had threatened to eat him; he would not have to give up his club, he would not have to go hunting for work, the dismal little economies which had faced him saying "You will have to do this or that" had vanished. He would not have to sell those few acres of land that were very dear to him because they were the last of an estate that had belonged to his forefathers since the time of King John. And lastly, but not leastly, worry about the immediate present was banished.

He had hated the idea of going back to England, interviewing Paradine, and taking hold of the ice-cold frozen hand of poverty.

Now he need not move, he could rest content in this pleasant place a little longer, and, yes, the woman was there who, like a beautiful jewel on the breast of pleasant Kupari, was the concentration of all the beauty of the sea, the loveliness of the islands, the perfume of the oleanders, the fragrance of the wild thyme.

Oh, she was there right enough, even in his upset she had been there, but hidden, and now, as he dressed, the vision of her came to him. He could entertain her in thought now. Up to this, he had only been able to entertain her in feeling: now she was possible.

As he dressed he would pause every now and then, and look out at the sea, whose blueness told him all sorts of happy things.

He would go and tell her of his grand fortune. He remembered that day on the reef when she had suggested that the wreck was the sign that his bad luck was over.

Without doubt she had brought him luck.

He fancied himself telling her that, and then——

He finished dressing.

Dear old Rosy had to be seen off before everything else, and down he went to the *salle-à-manger*, where the redoubtable Rosenbaum was at breakfast, eating an egg and reading the *Borsen Courier* both at the same time.

His luggage was packed and strapped, and in the hall waiting for the hotel bus, and, Cazalet, sitting down at the same table, ordered breakfast.

Rosenbaum, in the cold light of morning, did not seem quite the same man as the Rosenbaum of last night. He seemed more diffident, he seemed to wear the robe of the benefactor less easily. In fact, he seemed rather fed up with the unaccustomed part that had been thrust on him by a woman and Love.

All the same, he had to carry on with it and accept the sense of gratitude which every word and action of the other brought with it.

He could quite well have dispensed with Cazalet's company to the harbour.

"Now don't you worry yourself," said he. "Don't you go putting yourself out on my account."

"Nonsense," said the other, "it's no trouble—now come along—all your luggage ready, that's right."

On the way from the hotel to the harbour you pass Ragusa, and Cazalet, bubbling over with good spirits, gave his companion a short history of the Pearl of the Adriatic; at the ship's side he lingered, talking to the last, and then he stood waving whilst the vessel pushed away from the shore.

As a result of all this he lost a good deal of time, so that it was after twelve when he got back to Kupari.

XIII

You will have gathered that Mrs. Fanshawe was a woman of impulse.

She was also a woman, and the fact that Cazalet had not rushed to her first thing with the news of his salvation was resented, even though vaguely, by that perfectly illogical something which sometimes determines the actions of women in love.

She was not piqued. She was too sensible, and had too clear a view of the situation for that. It had given her pleasure to hear that Cazalet had gone off to bed in a joyous mood, evidently hugging his good fortune, and nearly hugging Rosenbaum; though, indeed, the pleasure derived from the latter fact might be counted as negligible. It pleased her to think that her plans had evidently completely succeeded, and it *ought* to have pleased her to think that one of her main objects, the hiding of her own hand in the matter, had been accomplished.

Just so, yet still the grit remained.

Then, during the night, turning over matters in her head, she had decided not to wait to be thanked. She had done her work, she had spent her time and money, and she had secured his happiness.

She told herself with that crass falseness which the mind sometimes employs in self-communion, that it didn't matter if she never saw him again—so long as he was happy.

Daylight, following upon three or four hours of restless sleep, brought a new mood; a quite causeless irritation against everything, including Kupari, a quite baseless feeling that she had made a fool of herself—not in spending her money and time in rescuing a good man from disaster, but in caring for him other than as a good man.

He did not care for her, never did, never could, never would.

Self-torture is not a pleasure, but there is a sort of wicked satisfaction in it that defies analysis. The child that beats its treasured doll is really beating itself, and finding a sort of satisfaction in the business.

So it came about that at nine o'clock that morning, she began to beat Kupari and the blue sea and Cazalet and herself, by giving her maid, and the Graham girl, orders to hike.

"Where are you going to?" asked the companion.

"Venice—and then home. I'm tired of this place."

"But we can't get a boat to-day—at least, it's too late with all the packing to do."

"The packing won't take an hour, and I don't propose to get a boat to-day. We can stop in Ragusa for a day or two and then go to Spalato."

"I see," thought the other. "You don't propose to go very far at first," and off she went to tell the manager of their departure and order the bill to be prepared.

She did not know the full inwardness of the affair, but she knew her employer, and she guessed a lot. But it was her duty to obey, not to question, so it came about that at twelve o'clock, or a little after, Mrs. Fanshawe was seated in the hotel garden waiting for the motor-car that had been ordered; her maid was in the hall presiding over the luggage, and the Graham girl was taking their receipted bill from the manager.

XIV

At this moment arrived back Cazalet.

At the sight of the woman seated under the trees he came straight towards her.

He looked younger, he looked happy, and he walked with a spring in his step not noticeable yesterday.

She rose to meet him. She had forgotten the luggage waiting in the hall, and when he asked her to turn and walk a little way with him in the direction of the beach, she consented.

"I have something to tell you," said Cazalet. "You remember the day I told you all about my affairs—the day we went off to that old wreck?"

"Yes?"

"Well, wonderful things have been happening. You remember my telling you about a man named Rosenbaum?"

"Yes?"

"He has managed to get my money back for me. He came here right from England yesterday, and I've just been seeing him off. Do you remember saying that perhaps that dud

wreck coming on top of everything else was a sign that my luck was going to turn? Well, it was."

"I'm glad," said she. "Very glad."

There was a slight constraint in her tone that puzzled him.

"Let us sit down for a moment," said he, pointing to a seat set against a huge bush of rosemary, and with a view of the beach. "I want to say something else."

They sat down, and he hung silent for a moment tracing patterns with the point of his walking stick on the sand of the path.

"You're *really* glad?"

She turned her head and looked at him, and the something else he had wanted to say was forgotten.

Then—four minutes later: "When? Oh, the very first moment I saw you—don't you remember?"

"Yes," she said, "I remember. You were standing watching us come on board—and it was all chance because the day before I was almost on the point of going back to Venice—think if I had!"

He gave a little shiver at the thought, and tightened his hold on the hand he had taken possession of.

"And if that hadn't happened yesterday," said he, "it would have been just as bad, for I wouldn't have been able to say to you what I have just said."

"You mean if you hadn't got back your money. What did it matter—I have enough money—I don't want your money."

"It's not my money," said he, "it's yours."

She gave a little gasp. Had Rosenbaum after all betrayed her and told the secret. But, looking at him, she knew that this was not so. He just meant that everything he had was hers. All the same, he had given her an opening on a subject that had begun to worry her. The affection she had planted in his heart for Rosenbaum was the subject that worried her, and the fantastic fruit it might bear in the form of Stock Exchange investments.

"So your money is mine, is it?" said she. "Well, I accept the gift, on one condition only. You know I'm a businesslike person, and you know very well you aren't. So will you let me advise you in money matters?"

"*Will* I let you—of course."

"And you won't buy any more cinematograph shares and things—even if nice Mr. Rosenbaum suggests them—without my consent?"

"Yes—absolutely. I'll take your advice in everything."

A figure showed on the path. It was the Graham girl, come to say that the car was waiting, and her employer,

anticipating the message, rose and went to meet her.

"Send it away," she said, "and have the luggage put back. I'm not going to-day."

Then she returned to Cazalet, and they took the path past the bathing beach to the little point from which could be seen the wreck, a black point swimming in the blue.

But there was nothing to be seen to-day.

"It's gone," said she, in a tone of disappointment, then, with a laugh, "Of course, those cinema people have sent and taken it away."

"Salved it," she might have said. "Just as I've salved you." But she did not even think the words, mind-wandering as she was towards the future, and a land happier even than the rosemary-scented shores of Kupari.

THE JESTER

I

The blaze of the new-risen sun lay upon the Place Bertin, the Rue Victor Hugo, the terraced streets, and the palms and angelins of the gardens crowning St. Pierre.

The sun was just working free of the sea-line, to take possession of the cloudless sky; the land wind had ceased for a moment to blow, and the coloured city lay in a crystal silence, broken only by the murmur of the Gouyave water coursing through the runnels of the streets.

Then, like the report of a pistol, came the sound of a green shutter flung back in the Rue Victor Hugo, answered by another from the Rue du Morne Mirail.

Shutter after shutter—and now voices, mule bells, and amongst the earliest sounds, the cries of the creole street sellers; sellers of mangoes, crabs, hot rolls—and everywhere now on the tepid wind coming in from the sea, the fragrant smell of coffee.

Down in the great market square the stalls were opening, the fruit stalls first, laden with oranges, bananas, palm-top heads, sapadillos; vegetables of all forms and colours, fresh in from the country.

Then the fish stalls—and what fish! Rose-coloured souris, sardines, bright as new-minted silver, speckled moringues, tunny; and by the first fish stall on the right as you entered the market place was standing this morning Fernand.

Fernand Pelliser—but only known as Fernand. Lots of people had forgotten his surname, for he was a character—the sort of character that lends itself to familiarity, if not respect.

Always jesting; thirty; stout, square; brown as a hickory nut; with rings in his ears, white teeth and a flashing smile, he was reckoned the best salesman in the market—and the greatest cheat.

He was also reckoned a man of property; a reputation based on a very small foundation. A wealthy man is sometimes sneered at, and a mean man is always derided, but a man both wealthy and mean is generally respected—at least by the crowd.

You see his meanness is a sort of guarantee that he will not be parted easily from his wealth. Fernand, without the wealth, had earned this respect.

He refused to be robbed by the tradesmen of the Rue Voltaire, he refused to lend to the cadgers of the Place Bertin, he turned a franc over twice before spending it—yet he owned a fishing boat as well as a market stall—and here came the boat, being dragged up on rollers right into the market square.

In the West Indies, and especially at Martinique, you have to eat fish directly it is caught, and so in the market of St. Pierre you would see boats being carried up from the sea edge on men's shoulders, or dragged up on rollers.

People, as a rule, liked to buy right out of the boats, and the contents of Fernand's great double-ended scow, brought to rest now by the stall, attracted an immediate crowd. Full-blooded negresses, quarteronnes, griffes, chabines, hawkers came to fill their baskets, servants came to buy for their mistresses, all in the bright costume colours of Martinique; all laughing, chattering, bargaining, with Fernand keeping his end up against them all, matching jest with jest, selling, giving change, and never a sou out at the end of the sale.

It only took twenty minutes to empty the boat, leaving nothing in it but a few jelly-fish, a lambi shell and half a dozen sardines. The crowd vanished like a puff of coloured smoke, and the redoubtable Fernand sat down on the boat gunwale to count his money. Then he paid his negro boatmen, and was in the act of pocketing the rest when along came Mayotte—that is to say Spring, Loveliness, everything delicious, in striped foulard.

Eighteen years of age, and walking with the light step of Atalanta—Mayotte was a dream.

She was also a fruit seller, and attended a little stall at the other side of the market. She had crossed over to buy a fish for her breakfast, and incidentally, to torment Fernand.

He was in love with her. Everyone was in love with her, but the love of Fernand was a burning passion, so he said, quite openly and jestingly, and so he had often said to her face, in that laughing way of his which made one never know exactly how to take him.

"Pouff," said Mayotte, glancing into the boat. "A couple of sardines and a lambi shell—where are your fish, Fernand?"

"In my pocket," said Fernand, slapping the francs in his pocket. "Where else?"

"Ai, where else?" laughed Mayotte, "since they say you keep everything there—even your heart."

"Maybe," said the other, "but not the fish I kept for you—see!"

He lifted a piece of sailcloth and disclosed a souri, still alive and flapping.

"For me?" cried Mayotte.

"Yes," said the liar, who had kept the fish for himself, but was unable to resist the temptation of turning the tables on her. "For you—who else?"

Somehow she wasn't deceived.

She laughed and opened her purse—that is to say, her palm—and disclosed a franc.

"How much?"

"Six sous."

"Six sous! Bon Die—why yesterday I bought one larger than that for five."

"But yesterday isn't to-day—well, take it for nothing, it is a gift."

She reached out her hand for the fish, but he stopped her.

"If you take it for nothing you must take the boat."

"Giving away your boat now!"

"My boat is me."

"Ou ai!" cried Mayotte, "so you want to get rid of yourself—well, I won't cart you away, not even at the price of a souri—come, give me five sous."

She held out her franc, and he gave her change, laughing the while he pocketed the money, then, wrapping the fish in a banana leaf, he offered to carry it home for her.

"No," said she, "but you can carry it to my stall, where I will put it in the shade till I am going."

The Martiniquans breakfast at eleven o'clock. The early fish and fruit market closed at ten, at which hour she would depart for the Rue St. Jean de Dieu, where she lived with her sister, who was a calendeuse; that is to say, her business was

the painting of Madras muslin, and folding it into turbans. The sister was almost as pretty as herself, and the souri was big enough for two; and as the two were as pretty as seven, quite a large amount of beauty would be fed by the little rose-coloured fish that was still flapping as she placed it in the shade beneath the stall.

It was not a big stall, but it was a blaze of colour—oranges and lemons, plantains, apple bananas, pommes d'Haiti, a couple of apricots, each as large as a mangold wurzel; and flowers, flowers of the l'oseille bois, the fleur d'Amour, and lilies whose scent was piercing as their brilliancy.

To tell the truth, the stall was not entirely hers. Maman Fally, of the Rue Peycette, was the true proprietor; Mayotte worked on commission only.

As Fernand stood for a moment before going off home, along came Jean Gastin, six feet tall, dark and handsome as the Devil.

Beside him Fernand looked and felt like a monkey—or like a gambler who knows that the man he is playing against is using loaded dice, and Fernand might have felt inclined to put a knife into the other, only he knew that Jean's dice had been loaded by Nature. It wasn't his fault that he was graceful as a greyhound, and possessed those damnable eyes, enough in themselves to turn a girl's heart inside out. Still, it was a bother, and the worst of the bother was that Fernand and Jean had been friends till Mayotte, suddenly blooming in the night, had cast the spell of her beauty on their friendship.

Girls do that—blossom all of a sudden. A year ago she was just a little slip of a thing, rather pretty but unnoticeable; to-day she was Mayotte.

"Bonjour Mayotte," said Jean, his eyes flashing over the girl and her coloured background of fruits, flowers and vegetables, "and how is business going this morning?"

"What do you want to buy?" answered she, turning to serve an old woman who was standing with two sous in her fist and her finger pointing at a pomme d'Haiti that had roused her desires.

"This," said he with a laugh, picking up a fleur d'Amour from amongst its fellows in a bowl, and fixing it in his coat. He threw a franc on the little board where the bowl stood, and was turning to go when she called him back.

"Your change," said she.

"For what?"

"The flower."

"You mean the franc?"

"Yes."

"Oh, ma foi," laughed Jean. "The flower is change enough from your hands, that ought never to handle money."

He took Fernand by the arm to lead him off too, and Mayotte, laughing, threw the franc into her little till. She had

no compunction in the matter, she was there to make profit for Maman Fally.

"Now why could not I have done a thing like that," thought Fernand, as he walked along with the other towards the entrance of the market. This infernal Jean was not only better-looking than himself, but also had a way with him. No wonder women were captivated by him. He, Fernand, had sold Mayotte a fish and received change; Jean had bought a flower from her and left the change. The two transactions between them had all the difference between a fish and a flower, and Jean held the flower.

They entered the Rue de la Victoire, which was near the market, a pleasant little street with green shutters and striped sunblinds, and here at a small café they halted and went in.

II

It was the Café Anodane, and Jean Gastin was manager and part proprietor. Like Mayotte, he was not rich enough to own a whole business, but, richer than she, he did not work on commission basis; he was partner, and took a share of the net profits, and he let people know it.

His partner was Monsieur Robert, a great invalid, owing to an injury received some years ago, and from which he would never really recover. M. Robert, who also possessed

other interests in St. Pierre, lived in the Rue Lafontaine, and left the management entirely to Jean.

They took their seats at a table, and a capresse boy in a white paper cap brought them, at a word from Jean, a bottle of plantation rum, a bowl of sugar and a brown pitcher of water. This is the early morning pick-me-up of Martinique, and when he had taken it, Fernand ordered breakfast. He would have breakfasted at home, only that he had sold the souri to Mayotte.

Jean breakfasted with him.

They talked as they ate, and Jean, all the while, without breaking the thread of the conversation, kept an eye on the doings of the café, the capresse boy, the negress cook in her wasp-coloured turban, who every minute would appear at the hatch leading to the kitchen with a dish in her hand.

There were half-a-dozen other people at breakfast, tradesmen from the Rue Peycette, and the Rue Victor Hugo, bachelors who, to save domestic worries, took their meals in restaurants, and, knowing what was what, came to the Anodane and the miraculous cooking of Yi, the negress in the wasp-coloured turban.

"And how's business?" asked Jean, turning from a discussion about the new buildings near the Fort. "They tell me the sardines have fallen off, though I saw plenty in the market this morning. Leroux seemed to be selling nothing else."

Fernand laughed.

"I'm not bothering about the sardines falling off, it's the profits that are falling off, what with the rise in market dues and costs. Twenty francs I had to pay only the other day for a lick of paint for a boat and a few repairs, that a few years ago wouldn't have cost five francs; and nets—Bon Dieu! A hole in a net makes twice as big a hole in one's purse."

"Well, you get along, anyhow," said Jean. "You don't seem to be losing flesh over the business."

Now if Fernand had a sore point it was on the subject of his "fat." He was not fat, just comfortable, but it was an obsession with him; getting fat meant getting old, and he dreaded both states.

"I'd be getting along better," said he, "if I could find a cook like Yi, and start a café with her."

Now if Jean had a sore point it was Yi. He might pride himself as much as he chose on his own success as a manager, but he knew well in his heart that it was Yi who made the Anodane successful. Her marvellous cooking was the advertisement that drew people, not his wonderful management.

Fernand knew this, and his reason for hitting Jean on his sore point was just—Mayotte. Mayotte had, in fact, been breakfasting with them, unseen, but no less there.

Since Troy the cause of half the fights and troubles between men has been—Mayotte.

"Well, why don't you?" asked Jean with a sneer. "You have only to make love to Yi—if she'd have you."

"Thank you," said Fernand, "but I don't propose to set myself up as a rival to you in her affections. As for me, she's a bit too dark, but tastes differ."

Then the fat was in the fire.

The other breakfasters found their attention drawn to the quarrel.

The two men were now beginning to shout at one another across the table. Then Fernand rose and flung down two francs, to pay for the meal.

Jean rose. "Take up your money," cried he, "I don't want it here. It smells of fish. Take up your money."

But Fernand was striding to the door.

Jean took up the two francs and flung them into the street after the other, who went on supremely unheeding, whilst a nigger child picked up the coins and made off with them.

III

Fernand went on his way, seeing black.

This thing was final, so it seemed to him; he had been friends with Jean more years than he could count on two hands, and now it was all over.

Also it seemed to him that somehow Mayotte had hit him, as well as fate.

He had all along guessed that she was sweet on Jean, and that he—Fernand—had not a chance if Jean reciprocated. He had borne with that idea as a man bears with a slight toothache, but now, this morning, this moment, it was as though the tooth had begun to rage.

Something said to him: "Jean will knock you out with her now whether he is sweet on her or not, just to spite you."

He came along to the Rue Victor Hugo.

The Rue Victor Hugo at this hour was like a street in the Arabian Nights.

The yellow houses, the green shutters and balconies, the blue sky, the blaze of sunshine, all combined to a theatrical effect delightful as a setting for the events of humdrum ordinary life.

One said to oneself, "Can real business be conducted in this unreal-looking but delightful place?" only for the answer to come at once from the lips of hawkers; the itinerant sellers of chickens, rice cakes, fish, bought in the early market, melons, baskets, pottery—heaven knows what.

Fernand lived in this street, occupying half a house just by the steps that led up to the Rue du Morne Mirail. The house belonged to him, and as taxes were negligible, by letting the upper part he lived not only rent free, but at a profit.

A negro woman looked after him, and as she had two children and he had room enough to let them stay with her, also a backyard big enough to let her keep chickens, he got her services for next to nothing. So you see Fernand was an economist, in the restricted sense of the word.

Not a mean man perhaps, but a careful man, who knew how, not only to make both ends meet, but also to make them lap over a bit.

The room which he used as a sitting-room and a place to have his meals, faced the street, got all the morning sun, was furnished with Martiniquan cane furniture, and had for decoration several ship models.

He had been a sailor in his younger days, and an expert builder of those little ships, on which he had lavished great care, especially on the model of the *Liberté*, his last vessel. A ship that had brought him luck, or so it seemed to him.

However that might be, he always consulted it, half-consciously, when in difficulty, or when put out.

To-day, having turned his money out of his pocket, kept a franc or two for casual expenses, and locked the rest up in a

cashbox, he sat down, lit a pipe and fell into thought, his eyes every now and then straying towards his mascot.

He was thinking of Mayotte.

The affair of this morning had somehow brought matters to a head.

He had been after Mayotte for a long time, but owing to that curious nature of his which made him jest in the face of the highest things, and which gave a seeming irresponsibility to his actions and opinions, he had never come really to grips with the matter of Mayotte till now—never realised what it meant to him, never faced the fact that his feeling for the lady had roots away down where his heart and solar plexus resided, and away up in that part of his mind where money is not counted and where money does not count.

That, in fact, she had got a grip of his being by some sort of trick which he couldn't explain, and seemed in a fair way towards twisting the neck of his happiness, his well-being, his comfort in life—his soul, in short. Yes, it was the devil of a business; he had put her off, played with the idea of her, refused to face reality, foozled and temporised on the edge of a crevasse, which had to be jumped if he wanted to land in the country of happiness.

Otherwise he would never be happy. Love told him this. Money would be no use to him, nor food, nor anything else.

He had to jump and do it at once. In other words he had to propose before Jean got a chance.

The bother was to make her take him seriously. With her he had always played the part of the jester, not intentionally, but just because that was the natural face he turned on the world. He was, in fact, a jester by nature. Whatever deeper feelings he had were covered deep by the waters of persiflage. Now that they had risen up like rocks lifted up by a submarine movement, would she recognise them as real or as something pushed up as a joke by a submarine clown—as something false, not true?

Why, even that morning, look at the way he had joked with her, telling her if she took the fish she must take the boat with it, and that the boat meant himself. Recalling that now, he could not recapture the light and irresponsible mood in which the words had been spoken. He remembered the words and her face. She had laughed—but had she laughed with or at him?

That was the question.

Well, he had to make the jump, and do it at once, that day, that minute—at least that hour.

He went to the room where he slept, and opening the red cedar box which was his wardrobe, took out his best suit.

Touched by a great occasion, a marriage, burial or even feast day, the Italian, southern Frenchman, and man of Fernand's type blossoms in black.

He put on his black suit, relieved by a red necktie, looked at himself in the little mirror which he used for shaving, took

his black wideawake hat, and left the house.

The Rue St. Jean de Dieu, where Mayotte lived with her sister, was not far from the Rue Victor Hugo. A street of small houses and of humble inhabitants, it was yet, in its way, one of the pleasantest of the streets of St. Pierre.

It belonged to the earliest days of the city, and the little houses had small verandahs and gardens where pepper trees and magnolias grew. Small gardens, and not well tended, but pleasant enough in their way, especially of an evening, when the warm twilight hid all the shortcomings, and the fireflies sprinkled the dusk around the magnolias.

Fernand, reaching the house of the adored, opened the rickety little gate, and coming up the walk found Mayotte and her sister Pauline on the verandah.

They were at work, Pauline at her turban-making business, Mayotte, free now of business care, the market being over, trimming herself a dress.

"Why, 'tis Fernand!" cried Mayotte in astonishment, sticking the needle in the foulard she was working on.

"Why, Fernand, what has happened; are you going to a wedding?"

IV

"Ma foi, yes—I hope so," replied the jester—betrayed by himself and instantly wishing he had bitten his tongue out. Then, awkwardly, and hat in hand, "but I see you are busy. I had hoped to speak a word in private to you about a small matter, but"—with a glance at Pauline—"perhaps——"

"Oh, la, la!" said Pauline, rising and picking up the Madras she had been working on, "if I am in the way I am soon out of it." She rose with a laugh, and flounced into the house, guessing that the hour had come.

She had known for a long while that he was after Mayotte, like a host of others, and she preferred him to any of the rest—especially to Jean. Pauline had no illusions about Jean, in fact she was definitely against him, and unfortunately she had voiced her opinion on the matter, thus making the creature more desirable than Nature had already made him.

Pauline considered Jean light, untrustworthy, and a follower after other girls. "Well, anyhow," once had retorted Mayotte, "he doesn't seem to be after you." The only cattish thing she had ever said to her sister, and a forcible piece of evidence of her feelings in the matter.

Pauline gone, the pair found themselves alone. Mayotte resumed her needlework.

"Well," she said, "and what is the small matter you wished to speak to me about?"

"I did not mean that," replied the other. "It is not a small matter to me—to you, perhaps—I do not know, but that is what I have called to find out."

"Well, what is it?"

"Can you not guess?"

"I know," cried Mayotte gaily, "it is the fish—did you not charge enough—or is it that you charged too much?"

Fernand heaved a sigh.

"You laugh," said he, "but it is not a matter of laughing with me. It is yourself. You yourself, yes. I have come to tell you that for me there is one person only—yourself."

"Fernand," said Mayotte, "this is foolishness."

"Perhaps," said Fernand, "but it is not foolishness to me."

"But Fernand, it is impossible."

"Impossible, no, since it is a fact."

"All the same, for me it is impossible."

"Then you cannot care for me?"

"It is not that. I care for you as a friend always cheerful and kind, but I am betrothed to another."

"Ah!" said Fernand, as though a bullet had struck him in the chest. Then: "You love another?"

"Yes."

"You are betrothed to him. Is it Jean?"

"Yes."

"Since when?" cried Fernand.

"Oh," said Mayotte, "a long time."

"But no one knew."

"We agreed to say nothing for a while."

"Jean!" said Fernand, as one speaking in a trance.

"Yes."

"Jean! I quarrelled with him this morning. Jean! Why, he was my friend—and never a word of this!"

Fernand stood for a moment staring at a green lizard that was sunning itself on the verandah bricks. Then like a man half-stunned he turned away, walked slowly down the path to the little gate, opened it, closed it behind him, and disappeared down the road.

Mayotte felt frightened.

She had never seen Fernand moved to exhibit his real feelings before. She had always looked upon him as a sunny, pleasant creature, a bit impudent, but irresponsibly so. That morning he had sold her a fish, offering to give it to her if she would take him with it. That was the sort of man who had turned up just now in the verandah, serious, and taking her refusal of him in that tragic way.

Pauline, coming out, found her in tears.

"How now!" exclaimed Pauline. "Crying—you?"

"'Tis Fernand," sobbed Mayotte, "I never scarcely looked his way, and now he goes on like this."

"How?" asked Pauline.

"Oh, like that—as though I could care for him."

"And why not?"

"Because," said Mayotte boldly, determined to tell her sister all, and have done with it, "because I care for Jean, and have promised to marry him."

"I always felt it would come to that," said Pauline, as one speaking of a jar broken by carelessness, or some such minor domestic catastrophe. The thing was not news to her, at least only news discounted, and it was Mayotte's affair, anyhow.

Then, after a pause, "Why did you keep it hidden from me till now?"

"What?"

"That you were betrothed to him?"

"Because," said Mayotte, "you were always going on about him—but I am thinking of Fernand. He said he quarrelled with Jean this morning, and I fear he may try now to do him an injury."

Pauline laughed.

"Oh," she said, "Jean will be able to look after himself—and he has long legs."

V

If Fernand had met his rival on leaving Mayotte, or even that afternoon in the streets, there might have been trouble, but fortunately the other had been called away to Morne Rouge, and the two men did not come near one another for several days.

When they did come within speaking distance in the market, they ignored one another, Jean because of the quarrel in the café, Fernand because of that and Mayotte.

Meanwhile Mayotte remained the same towards them both. She would even cross over to Fernand's stall in the

market, to speak to him on some trifle, and Fernand, who had sunk his feelings had, perhaps out of bravado, returned seemingly to his old, gay and natural self.

So things went on for a month or so, and then one day Jean disappeared.

He did not come to the café in the morning to conduct the business, and the landlady where he lived said he had not slept in his room the night before; Yi, the cook at the café, said the same.

You can fancy the talk and speculation when four more days passed and no Jean.

On the morning of the fifth day a porteuse came into the market and stopped at Fernand's stall. A porteuse is a woman, generally young, a female peddler, who balances her pack on her head, and carries goods from town to village, tramping the roads, heedless of the heat, the sun, the rain, time and distance.

This porteuse was young, straight as a dart, with black flashing eyes, and teeth like pearls. She stopped at Fernand's stall, and said in a voice lowered a tone.

"Jean Gastin bids me tell you that he has need of you. He will be by the great cedar this afternoon at the bend of the National Road a mile from Grande Anse. He is in trouble."

"Need of me!" said the astonished Fernand.

"Yes," said the porteuse.

"But what is it?"

"I don't know," said the porteuse, "but he said if I told you he was in trouble you would come. He asks you not to mention this message to anyone."

Then she passed on, proud and straight, a flame of a woman, to be lost in the crowd.

The porteuse often carried messages as well as goods. There was nothing surprising in her bringing the message; the surprise was in its nature. Jean was in trouble, and was appealing for help, or at least advice, to the man with whom he had quarrelled. That was the strange thing. Also, Jean was his rival.

"I shan't go," said Fernand to himself. "There may be some trick in this—besides, what do I care?"

Then his eye caught sight of Mayotte, like a butterfly against the coloured background of her stall. She evidently knew nothing of Jean being in trouble.

In some curious way, for Fernand, Mayotte became at once part of the Jean problem. Fernand knew quite well that if Mayotte were aware that her lover was in trouble she would fly to him. He could not tell her, owing to what the porteuse had said. Failing that, he would fail Mayotte if he did not go to Jean and find out what the trouble was. That was how the situation suddenly revealed itself to him.

It seemed to this jester that the gods were treating him in the jesting manner which was his towards the world.

He hated Jean, yet would have to serve him—at least, go to him. Mayotte, like a butterfly over there in the sunshine, said this without speaking.

He put on his linen coat, gave the stall over to a friend to look after, and started.

VI

The National Road from St. Pierre to Grande Anse lies like a ribbon stretching between the high woods and cane brakes, manioc fields, and the lands of the old plantations. It climbs and falls and climbs and falls, now raising you till you can see a hundred mornes, purple pictures of sea, far glimpses of Pelée, and the roofs of tiny villages, farm buildings and rhumeries; now taking you to valleys where the silence is broken only by the wind in the canes and the voice of the siffleur de Montagne.

The distance is twenty miles, and Fernand, owing to his early start, managed to catch the stage which runs by way of Morne Rouge, past the old Calabasse Road, past Ajoupa Bouillon and the Rivière Falaise, to the point where the great cedar stands, close to the bend, and the by-road to the hamlet of Mirail.

Here Fernand got out, and the stage went on, leaving him alone.

He sat down on the trunk of a fallen palmiste, took off his hat, wiped his brow, and then, hat in hand, sat waiting and thinking. Jean would know that if he came at all he would come by the stage, and knowing the time of the stage's arrival, would be here to meet him. Yet there was no sign of Jean.

A man passed driving a mule laden with wine skins, and a cart carrying rum barrels, and drawn by oxen.

The dust settled, and silence took the road. Nothing—Jean would not come. He felt a bit relieved, though irritated at the journey he had undertaken, and the possibility that the thing might be a hoax, or a device to get him away from St. Pierre, for some reason or another.

Anyhow, after waiting a little he would be free to return, catching the next stage back, and he was saying this to himself when Jean appeared, coming along the path from Mirail.

Yes, he was in trouble right enough. His very walk told that—sick, too—ghastly—why, he was thin as a skeleton.

He came towards Fernand, and then, taking his seat on the fallen tree bole, he motioned the other to sit beside him. There was no hint at all in the attitude of the two men as to the quarrel that had parted them in the café.

"Well," said Fernand, "and what is all this? What makes you look so—Why have you left St. Pierre?"

"Mon Dieu!" cried Jean, the words bursting from him as though he were exhaling air after a dive into some frightful depths. "Why!——"

He stripped up his sleeve and showed his right arm, which was of a dull dead colour from the elbow to the shoulder.

"Fer de lance," said he, "a fer de lance that bit me."

Fernand drew back.

Now the poison of the fer de lance may kill instantly, or may kill in a month after great suffering; or it may lie in the system and destroy a man slowly, and with terrible disfigurement. It may take a year, two years, three years—the patient may possibly recover, but in that case he is left a living skeleton, the ghost of a man. There is no antidote to prevent these terrible effects.

Jean showed his neck.

There was a small patch there, too.

"But surely——" cried Fernand.

"It is as I say," replied the other, pulling down his sleeve. "When it did not kill me outright, this came, then I went to a doctor at Fort de France. I did not give him my real name, nor where I had come from, for I did not want people to know this and pity me, and point at me and say, 'Look at that poor devil, he's worse than dead.' I gave a false name, and an address in Fort de France. He said, 'Yes, it is what you think;

go home, and I will call upon you later to-day.' I knew what that meant—the hospital.

"So," went on Jean, "I could not go back to St. Pierre. I am hiding with a relation at Mirail. That is why I sent for you."

"Go on," said Fernand.

"I have made my plans," went on the other, "I must hide—be alone—away from all. I will go to Sombrero."

Fernand knew the place. There are two Sombreros, one at the entrance to the Caribbean Sea, the other out beyond Martinique. An islet covered with bay cedar bushes, with a lighthouse to mark its dangerous reef, of which the islet is a part.

No one ever goes to Sombrero except the men from the relief ship that comes once in two months.

"But there is no house there!" said Fernand.

"There is a hut left by the cement workers."

"But food!"

"I will be able to get food from my relation who has a boat, besides I can fish, there are sea gulls' eggs and crabs, sea urchins, bêche-de-mer."

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!" said Fernand.

"But I must have money," went on Jean. "I've talked it out with my relation. He will not charge for the use of the boat, but he is not rich enough to pay for the few things I will want, but if I can give him three thousand francs he will undertake to keep me in things I will need."

After a moment's silence he went on:

"That is why I sent for you. My partner M. Robert, will, I am sure, give me this sum. I want you to go to him and ask him for it. We have no contract between us, but now that I must give up he will be able to sell the café, as he has often wanted to do. He is a just man, and he will give you the money for me."

"Must I tell him the reason?"

"No. Tell him that things have occurred making it impossible for me to return to St. Pierre, that is enough."

"I will do it," said Fernand.

Then, after a pause: "Is there no one else to whom you would wish me to speak, saying that you will not be able to return?"

"No," said Jean.

Fernand was thinking of Mayotte.

"No woman?"

"No," said Jean, "women are nothing to me now." He laughed, and fell into a fit of moody abstraction.

Then he said: "You will do this?"

"I have promised," answered the other. "I will go to St. Pierre by the evening stage, which will pass here soon, and return to-morrow at the same time."

"I will be here," said Jean.

Then he rose up, and saying good-bye, took his way back to Mirail.

Fernand sat plunged in thought.

He was astonished, not only by the catastrophe, but also by the callousness of the other, who seemed to care for nothing but his own position. Mayotte, the woman to whom he was betrothed, seemed not the least in his thoughts, or only as one of the women who were nothing to him now.

Also it came to him vaguely as a strange fact that Jean in his terrible position was able to think and plan for his future in that cold sort of manner, caring for nothing but just the chance of escape from the pointing finger, the pity that would be worse to his pride than a blow.

No matter. Fernand had only one thing to do, and that was to carry out his promise, and obtain the three thousand francs.

Half an hour later the stage from Grande Anse to St. Pierre turned the corner of the road, and Fernand, hailing it, got on board.

VII

Next morning, Fernand, having breakfasted early, went to call on M. Robert.

Unable to attend the market, he had deputed the business of fish-selling to one of his boatmen.

After leaving the house of M. Robert, he was coming down the steps to the Rue Victor Hugo, when whom should he meet but Mayotte. Mayotte had left her stall in the market to run up to Fladrin in the Rue Victor Hugo, to enquire about a consignment of fruit which he had not sent her, and glancing up the steps she saw Fernand coming down.

Mayotte, without showing it, had been troubled about Jean's absence from St. Pierre. People were talking. Rumours had reached her that Jean was in business difficulties, and so forth. She did not believe these rumours, she felt in her heart that were it so he would have told her—but still, where was he? The question was like a living thing, gnawing at her heart. The worst of all was that she could not ask people, or only in a casual way as one might ask about an acquaintance. People did not know that she was betrothed to him.

But Fernand did, and when she saw him coming down the steps, the feeling came to her at once that here was someone to whom she could speak. She pushed aside from her mind all that about his having come to ask her to marry him, and his anger at the news that she cared for Jean. It seemed to her in her trouble that he would forget all that, and with beautiful simplicity, when he reached her, said:

"Fernand, I did not see you in the market. I wished to see you, and ask you have you heard anything about Jean? People are talking, and I do not know what to think."

"No," said Fernand, upset by the sudden question, "I know nothing about him."

He spoke almost brusquely. He was a very bad liar—at least out of business hours—and he knew it intuitively, and instinctively tried to hide his defect behind a show of short temper.

The girl looked at him. She was not in the least satisfied with his reply. It seemed to her that he was hiding something; on the other hand, his short manner might be due to her asking him about Jean at all.

"Well, good day," she said, "I only thought I would ask you," and passed on.

Fernand swore beneath his breath.

A nice position truly this wretched Jean had put him in. Making him go to St. Pierre and fetch him money, making him lie like that to Mayotte.

He would have run after the girl, only he was bound by his promise; also, even if he had not been bound, how could he have told her the truth?

A nice position, truly.

He turned to the left, and entered the offices of M. Bartholome, with whom he had some business to transact, and half an hour later he took the stage for Grande Anse.

VIII

He had not long to wait under the cedar tree. Scarcely had the stage disappeared round the corner of the road when Jean appeared from the by-way to Mirail.

"I have got the money," said Fernand, taking a bundle of notes from his pocket, "three thousand francs, you said, and here they are."

Jean thanked him, took the notes, and led the way along the Mirail road, to a bank where they sat down whilst he counted the money. Here they would not be observed, for very few people used this lonely road. Though he had no fear of being seen, still he did not want people at St. Pierre to know that he was in the Grande Anse district. The porteuse he could trust implicitly, also Fernand—he reckoned on people talking about him for a while, and wondering, and

then forgetting him, fancying, maybe, that he had left the island for good.

When he had counted the notes he put the bundle in his pocket.

"And to think of that man," said he, "who can scarcely leave his room, to think of him who can take no pleasure in life, alive, and look at me!"

He was talking of M. Robert.

Fernand said nothing, and Jean, brooding for a moment said nothing; the wind in the cane field behind them only spoke, with that curious muttering sigh which is the voice of the cane field when the canes are nearly ripe for cutting.

Jean rose up.

"And now," said he, "it only remains for you to see the end of me—if you will."

"As it pleases you," replied Fernand. "I have done what I can, and I will do what I can; it will never be said of me that I deserted a friend in trouble."

"That," said Jean, "is why I sent for you."

This tremendous compliment, spoken out of the depths of a selfish soul, left Fernand unmoved.

He was not talking to a man, but to one of the Elementals. The same Person who had dwelt with Nessus

and dealt with Dezanira.

In a vague way he felt this Presence, and was lifted by it quite out of the ordinary ways of life. It had but to speak, for him to obey.

"If you will go with me to Sombrero, to see the last of me, that is all I ask," said Jean. "It is not far, but a few hours in the boat."

"When do you leave?" asked Fernand.

"Now," replied the other. "It is not yet noon. It is only half an hour's walk from here to the bay, where my cousin, Pierre Le Moan, is waiting for me—will you come?"

"Yes," said Fernand.

They came along the road, passed the little village of Mirail, where the cousin lived, and then by a cliff path found the bay where the boat was waiting, beached on the black sands.

The sands of Grande Anse are black, or nearly black, owing to the iron mixed with them, and on the beach between the Pointe du Rochet and the Pointe de Croche Mort there is, as a rule, a big sea running. But this little bay beyond the Pointe du Rochet is nearly always calm, protected by the bluff, and to-day it was even calmer than usual.

The boat was lying just above the tide mark, and by it was standing Pierre Le Moan, a tall black-haired man with a

saturnine face that entirely belied his character, which might be defined in four words: Rigid and Incorruptible Honesty.

In the boat there was a bundle of provisions, another of clothes. Sombrero possessed a well, so they had no need to carry water, and there was also a hut there, left over by the last repairers of the lighthouse.

Sombrero really consists of two islets. The outer one, carrying the lighthouse, is separated from its fellow by a gut of sea, which is impassable, owing to the race of the tides through it.

The inner islet, nearer the land, had been used as a stores base during the rebuilding of the lighthouse in 1891, hence the hut, and a few ruined sheds in which cement and so forth had been stored. The well is near the hut. It holds cold clear water, and its level never falls. Away beyond the cement sheds is another well, whose water, brown and turbid, is boiling hot.

The place is part of the great volcanic ridge of which Pelée is also a part, and some day, perhaps, will sink again to the depths from which it rose.

Jean, having introduced Fernand to Le Moan, took out the bundle of notes and handed them to his cousin, who counted them and placed them in his pocket.

Le Moan, who owned a small plantation near Mirail, was not very well-to-do. All the same, the money in his pocket

was safe as in a bank, and to its uttermost centime would go to Jean's upkeep.

Le Moan would charge nothing for visiting Sombrero periodically, and bringing food and supplies; that was a labour of duty which he owed to man and to his cousin.

Le Moan's great grandfather had helped to pull down the Bastille; he was, in fact, a child of the French Revolution, one of the children of its nobility and integrity, as against its cruelty and ferocity.

Even yet in the old colony there still remain a few of this type, practical idealists, who perform that which glib-mouthed Liberty only promises.

The three men got the boat water-borne, Le Moan getting in last and pushing off from the beach with an oar. The wind was favourable, blowing from shore, and now, beyond the shelter of the Pointe du Rochet, they took the deep, far-spreading swell, that moved in meadows of ruffled violet, from the point of brilliant white that was the lighthouse of Sombrero.

Le Moan steered; Jean was crouched forward in the bows, and Fernand sat on the after thwart, facing the steersman.

Running with the wind and current, the only sound was the trickle of the water against the planking, except an occasional creak of the mast, an occasional cry from a passing bird.

Fernand, his face towards the land, saw Martinique, a dazzling vision of amethystine peaks and purple mornes, spreading from the cane fields of Grande Anse to the far lift of Pelée. Hills and valleys, high woods, wide stretching fields of cane, and all sending on the following wind their perfume.

Turning and facing the bow, Fernand could see Sombrero, no longer veiled by distance, but sharp and definite, hard against the blue, from its water-washed rocks to the lighthouse with its bulbous head. The Pharos, that from dusk to dawn dominated land and sea, like a great windmill sweeping arms of light thirty miles long.

IX

The boat ran into the little cove that lies amidst the rocks on this side of the islet.

They beached her on the sands, and having hauled her up a bit began getting out the stores.

Leaving the others to this business, Fernand came towards the hut left by the lighthouse repairers, and beyond which lay the cement sheds. The hut was built of boarding, and roofed with corrugated iron painted white. It was in good repair, though long deserted and given over to wind and

weather. The door was not locked, simply on the latch, and Fernand, opening it, went in.

It was a one-roomed hut, with four sleeping bunks, like those on board of a ship, a rough table in the centre, and an old swinging lamp, evidently deemed not worth taking away.

Pasted to the wall were some remains of old pictures cut from French newspapers of five years ago; a cuspidor stood in one corner, and on the table lay an old metal spoon with a broken handle.

There was nothing else in this place but the sunlight that showed the spiders' webs, and a centipede that, frightened from beneath the table, was running along the floor by the wall like a railway train.

The centipede vanished by some slit, as though whisked through by a hand from outside. Fernand stood for a moment looking around him, then he went out, leaving the door open, and came to the cement sheds.

They presented a more desolate picture than the hut. For some reason they were more dilapidated, and their evidence of the activity that had once gone on here was more pronounced. Under the broken roof a few half-empty kegs lay rotting; a wheelbarrow without a wheel lay on its side, and here and there on the spilt white powder that had hardened under the weather, could be seen the footprints of the workers who had once been here.

Fernand went on to the well. It was almost brim-full. He put his finger in; the water was cold as ice.

He had heard of the boiling well, and it was not difficult to locate it, for a faint cap of steam showed a hundred yards away amongst the bay cedar bushes that grew here almost from shore to shore.

He came to it and looked down at the water, turbid, amber-coloured and unstill. There were little eddies, in which insects that had fallen to their death were moving, and the whole surface every now and then seemed to swell upwards ever so slightly, as though in response to the respiration of some life hidden below.

He turned from it, and came back to help in carrying the things from the boat to the hut. Then, when everything was done, it was time to get back to the mainland, as the wind was still blowing from there, and the journey would be slow.

Jean was smoking a cigarette.

He was the only one of the three capable of tobacco just then. He seemed indifferent. It might have been that he had come here for a short holiday. He had counted the stores, had examined the fishing lines, and the hooks, whose bait would be the hermit crabs and the limpets that clung to the rocks; he had indicated to Le Moan some things that he wished brought at Le Moan's next visit—all this indifferently.

Then, as the boat put off, he stood watching them go, lifting a hand, standing for a moment, and then turning and

making towards the hut.

"He takes it well," said Fernand.

Le Moan, who was steering, said nothing for a moment, then he broke out, and there was a strange bitterness in his tone.

"Yes, he takes it as he has always taken life. I have known him from a child. For Jean there has always been no one in the world but Jean. For him the hospital had less fear than injury to his pride by men knowing what has happened to him. For that he has laid this burden upon me. How could I refuse? I am of his blood. Besides, he knows me, just as he knows you. He said to me, 'I can depend on Fernand Pelliser'—oh, they are cunning, these selfish ones; being animals they have the cunning of animals, and that is all there is to say about it. But he has made a mistake; the hospital he has chosen for himself will not hold him long; he will get tired of himself; he will learn there to hate himself, and that for a selfish man is death."

"There is a girl in St. Pierre who cares for him," said Fernand.

"There is sure to be," said Le Moan with a laugh. "Jean was never backward with the girls."

Fernand said nothing for a moment. He had been friends with Jean in the ordinary way for years, knew that he was reckoned a spark, and that St. Pierre was not a nunnery. He had never bothered about Jean's morals, considering that they

were no worse than anyone else's, but there was something in Le Moan's tone that raised his suspicions.

"As for the matter of that," said Fernand, "the girls are forward enough, and Jean was of the sort that attracts them."

Le Moan laughed again. It was not a pleasant laugh, nor was it sinister: it was the laugh of Justice turned cynic.

"It is not of the forward girls I am thinking, trollops only fit to be used and cast on the midden heap. Rose-Marie was different."

"Rose-Marie?"

"The girl who drowned herself because of Jean."

"Good God!" said Fernand.

"Ay, you may well cry out. She was innocent and a virgin; but that is nothing, for all girls are that to start with; but she was also a pure rose of gold. She lived over here on this side, and no one knew about it in St. Pierre, and few people here."

"Did he betray her?"

"He made her love him. It did not matter that he took advantage of her, for nature is nature, but he made her love him, and then he turned the face of his cold black soul upon her and she died."

"God!"

"Flung herself from the Pointe du Rochet. It was not that he had betrayed her; it was just that he had made her mind to blossom in love, and then destroyed the blossom."

Fernand took a deep breath.

"Had I known this I never would have helped him, nor gone for money for him," said he.

"Oh yes, you would," said Le Moan, "simply because you have done so. You, like myself, are an honest man; you have proved it by taking this trouble for one who is no relation. Had you known this about Jean you still would have helped him, leaving the good God to settle accounts.

"But I am different from you," went on Le Moan, "in that I knew the girl—and loved her."

Fernand sat still. The mast creaked to the wind, and the sound of the bow wash came "splash-splash" as the little waves hit the planking.

Then he leaned forward towards Le Moan.

"I told you," said he, "that in St. Pierre he has left a girl—she is betrothed to him. I cared for her, but he was before me with her."

"Then you are not different from me," said Le Moan, "or only in that the girl you loved is still alive, and perhaps will forget him—whilst Rose-Marie is dead."

"How could you then have done it?" asked Fernand.

"Which?"

"How could you have helped him in his distress? I swear that if he had done to Mayotte what he did to Rose-Marie, I would have put a knife in his heart."

A cold gleam came into the dark face of Le Moan—a light, as though from the back of his soul.

"I helped him because I am a Christian," said he, "and I could not have it on my conscience to say that I had refused help—but what have I helped him to—Look!"

He pointed to Sombrero, desolate in the distance.

Fernand knew, and it came to him in a flash of revelation that behind the Christian in Le Moan stood the pagan spirit of hatred born of wrong done. That, for Le Moan, Jean was as a loathsome reptile trapped in a circle of fire. That every visit of Le Moan to Sombrero bringing stores to the marooned one would also be a visit of inspection, a satisfaction of the dark passion that lies in all men's souls—the craving for revenge.

And who could say that Le Moan was in the wrong—who can say that the passion for revenge against those who injure the innocent is an evil passion?

So argued Fernand in his dim way, and so he argued that night, when, staying in Grande Anse, owing to the fact that the last stage had departed, he stood on the cliffs and watched the great beams of the far lighthouse sweeping sea

and land, seeming to beckon the world to behold the fate of Jean Gastin, destroyer of women.

X

Jean, left to himself, did not even turn again to look at the boat.

He came up to the hut where the stores had been placed, and the mattress and pillow which Le Moan had provided. A single blanket was more than enough in that climate.

Then he came out.

He knew Sombrero.

He had come here once before, sailing a boat over from Grande Anse single-handed, despite the warnings he had received about the tides and rocks.

It took an experienced man like Le Moan to do this business safely, for Le Moan had assisted in the repairs to the lighthouse, bringing over stores and tools for the workers. All the same, Jean had come here alone some two years ago and spent half a day fishing, returning in safety, and with a knowledge of the place that was useful when it came to the making of plans in his great extremity.

He came out of the hut, and glanced around him.

The boat was far away, the sail showing like the wing of a gull, and beyond the boat the hills of Martinique floated in the late afternoon light like blue and ragged clouds, with here and there a touch of jasper, and high beyond them the rose gold snow of Pelée's cloud cap.

The brown sail of a fishing boat showed in the north, making for Dominica. Elsewhere the sea showed nothing.

He turned his gaze back to the lighthouse.

Now that he was alone on Sombrero, with no boat to take him away, and the knowledge that no boat could ever take him away, Sombrero was a different place to that which he had known.

That day of his visit, nothing had impressed him much, but now everything around had significance. The bay cedar bushes stirred by the wind, the sound of the wind that stirred them, the weak mewing and complaining of the gulls, the shapes of the rocks by the sea edge, and lastly, but not leastly, the smooth white bulk of the lighthouse.

The lighthouse seemed to stand with its back turned to him.

There were human beings there, but owing to the gut of dividing sea they might as well have been in Sirius.

The island of Sombrero,* at the entrance to the Caribbean Sea, has height, but this islet, low-lying, has little

relationship with the shape of a hat, except that it is oval in outline, with the lighthouse at the broken end facing west. The whole length of the place was therefore between it and Jean, also the dividing passage of sea.

* Otherwise known as "Spanish Hat."

In some curious way the smooth stone giant seemed to intensify and focus the desolation, attract to itself the crying of the sea birds and the sound of the wind and the muttering of the waves, and the thoughts of the marooned one.

It had, in fact, a personality.

Huge, bleakly white, silent, lifeless, yet containing life, possibly observant, absolutely indifferent, it was, in fact, a person.

Alone on a desert island one has Nature for a companion, but this terrible bulk, man-made and desolate with the desolation that speaks in arterial roads and reservoirs, pushed Nature aside, and took all friendly significance from her hundred voices.

Jean turned from it, and went to the rocks on the northern side, where he stood looking down on the sea.

Just here the water runs deep, and it was here that he had fished on that day of his visit, little knowing—.

When dark fell that night, and almost before the lighting of the first star, a great white beam of light swept Sombrero.

It was the lighthouse beginning to speak in the language of semaphore.

Two short flashes and one long. Sombrero, Sombrero, S-o-m-b-r-e-r-o.

They lit the cement sheds and the hut, and Jean, coming out, watched them sweeping to sea, lighting the bay cedar bushes and the northern rocks. Hypnotic, like the passes of a mesmerist, yet not inducing sleep.

XI

Next day Fernand returned to St. Pierre.

He was not a very swift thinker, and his mind was of the type that reacts to sentiment more quickly than to the reagency of reason.

It was not till he was well back in St. Pierre, with his journeys accomplished, and the money paid over to Le Moan for Jean, that Reason, a bit disgruntled, got in a word. "Yes," said Reason, "you have taken a tremendous lot of trouble, and involved yourself in expense over this business—why? You pitied the man. Yes, of course you did, but was that your main motive? See here. Did you not say to yourself, not louder than a flea's whisper: 'I am doing this because Mayotte would wish it done?' You cannot answer. Aha! I

have got you in a cleft stick. What a position for a man of sense. You helped this scamp because you knew the girl you care for loves him, and would have run barefoot to Grande Anse to bring him help; he cut you out with her, yet you looked after him for her sake.

"Of course the spirit of pity helped, but tell me this, Fernand Pellisser: if Jean had not been suffering as he is suffering, if he had been a simple rotter or defaulter, undeserving of pity, would you have helped him for the sake of Mayotte?

"You would, you fool, and you know it. Truly that is a good joke, and worthy of you whom they call the jester."

Fernand, after a moment's thought, replied:

"If I had known of what he did to Rose-Marie I would not have helped him at all."

"Yes," replied Reason, "and why? Because you would have said to yourself, 'He might have done the same to Mayotte.' You are so tangled up with Mayotte that all your actions come from her. You are like a dancing Pulcinello on the end of a string—which she pulls."

However all that might have been, the fact remained of Fernand's good action, and of its evil effect upon him.

Evil, because, to begin with, he did not attend market on this morning of his return, and the next day news was spreading through the place that he had sold his business and his boat.

Yet he had been doing well, and owed no man anything.

It is true that he had no money much in the bank, simply because up to this he had had a hard fight to make good. But now he was just beginning to bud, as you may say, and look! All at once he was nipped!

It was as though Mayotte had cut the string of the puppet, so that it could dance no more.

He had collapsed as a business man. Some people said that he had been gambling, and others that he had lost heart owing to the fact that Mayotte would have nothing to do with him.

For—and it was a curious fact—though Jean's affair with her had scarcely been noticed, Fernand's sweetness had been a matter of comment.

Days passed, and new rumours began to circulate about Fernand.

People said he was drinking.

This was true enough, as we all must drink as well as eat, but as a hint that he was drinking alcohol to excess, it was false.

He spent a good deal of the day at the Café Ambasse in the Rue Victor Hugo, but he went there chiefly because it was the resort of shipping people. Shipping agents in St. Pierre, ships' chandlers, ships' officers.

It seemed that Fernand, though he had not been to sea for some years, held a mate's certificate, and with it he was now fishing for a job.

He had done with St. Pierre, done with everything, and wished to get away. He had said so in a moment of expansion to Lavelle, the agent of the Gossard Line, and Lavelle had talked, and the gossips followed suit.

"Now what's the matter with Fernand Pellisser? Thrown up his business and thrown up everything. Something on his mind—sits drinking all day at the Ambasse or at Proport's bar. He's trying to get a mate's job. Wonder why? Why? Well, it seems to me that he wants to get away from here in a hurry, but he doesn't owe money, does he? Lord no, he's sold his business they say, and must have lots of money——"

The porteuse who had brought Fernand the message from Jean came into the town one day, and hearing the gossip began to put two and two together.

She had been away for some time on one of her long journeys, going from Morne Rouge to Calabasse and from Calabasse to St. Jacques, and now it seemed that Jean had not returned to St. Pierre, and that Fernand, who had received a message to meet Jean by the great cedar tree on the road to Grande Anse, was leaving St. Pierre. Had thrown up his business in a hurry, and was seeking a berth on a ship.

All this seemed strange to her, and she spoke about it to her sister in confidence, and the sister told her young man in confidence, and he told his mother and—bang! the whole

town had the news that Fernand's strange conduct had something to do with Jean's disappearance.

Mayotte, hearing it, sought out the porteuse, whose name was Marie Ribot.

"I do not know how it has got about," said Marie, "but it is true. I took a message from Jean Gastin to Fernand Pellisser, asking Fernand to meet him by the big cedar near Grande Anse, and he went, for the driver of the stage told me he took him to Grande Anse and that he got off at the big cedar. Fernand has been twice to Grande Anse, and once he stayed the night."

"I met Fernand," said Mayotte, "and asked him did he know anything about Jean, and he told me that he knew nothing."

"Well, then," replied Marie, "he said what was not the truth."

"I thought so," said Mayotte, "he spoke as though he were not telling the truth."

Then she went away and brooded.

She alone, with her sister, knew that the two men had been rivals—at least that Fernand had been a rival of Jean's; she had dreaded that Fernand might do Jean an injury. Pauline had laughed at this, saying Jean could look after himself, as he had long legs.

Well, look!

Jean had disappeared, so that his disappearance was a nine days' wonder, and now Fernand, having lied about not having seen Jean, was leaving St. Pierre in a hurry—had sold his business—was running away.

What should she do—what could she do?

She had no one to consult. Pauline had always been against Jean and she would say: "Leave things alone. You have nothing to go on but what people say, and Jean is capable of looking after himself." That was what Pauline would say, and Mayotte could hear her saying it. There was no one else to speak to, or only one. The Chief of Police.

A person who had always filled Mayotte's simple mind with awe. M. Patrigent, who had the head of an old Roman Emperor, the harsh manner of a pursuer of criminals, and the heart of a child—and of a father. There weren't really any criminals to pursue in St. Pierre, so that was why perhaps M. Patrigent spent so much of his time in the club, playing dominoes, sometimes playing patience, sometimes just dozing.

But to-day she found him in his office, and when she told her tale, the old gentleman pulled his Imperial, drummed on the table with his fingers, and lit a cigarette with a meditative air.

Then he made her tell it all over again. He was a great reader of Gaboriau and all the writers of that school, and had often fancied himself that great writer's great detective. This

was the first case of mystery and importance that had come to him, so you may fancy——

"Above all, my dear, silence," said M. Patrigent. "Leave everything to me, and come to me again to-morrow morning, with any other information on the matter you may be able to collect."

XII

Meanwhile, during all these days Le Moan pursued his work on his farm, with what, who knows, going on in his dark soul, so full of rectitude, yet so alive with the power of hatred.

Then one day he determined to visit the man on Sombrero.

It was not yet time for the periodical visit he had promised, yet he would throw this visit in as an extra.

He had little pleasure or interest in life, and to do good is always pleasant—as, for instance, visiting the sick; and as for interest—well, there would be plenty of interest in this business.

He pushed off in his boat, working her single-handed, and the wind was favourable, light and steady, and coming

from a sky filled with the promise of fair weather.

Approaching Sombrero, the hut showed now distinctly, and the sheds, but there was no sign of Jean.

Le Moan beached the boat, hauled her up a bit, and then started for the hut. The door was open and he went in. Jean was not there.

He looked round, and came out. The whole islet was within his view, but on it no visible living thing, with the exception of a great gull brooding on a rock.

He went back to the hut.

There was a plate on the table, with some food on it, fairly fresh, as though left only yesterday, and a cup with some water in it. The blanket of the bunk lay on the floor. One of the newspaper pictures on the wall, that had blistered, owing to the heat, moved slightly, with a rustling sound. A centipede crept out from beneath the blister, and dropped on the floor.

Le Moan left the place, and standing at the door, looked around.

Then he heard a far-off voice hailing him, and saw at a window just below the lantern of the lighthouse, a man leaning out and gesticulating with his arm.

It was too far for spoken words to carry, but the man's gestures were clear.

Le Moan raised his hand, came running back to the boat, pushed her off and rowed seaward round the islet, past the gut of sea, and so to the stone landing steps of the lighthouse, leading to the ladder of entrance.

The man was there on the little platform up to which the ladder led. He waited till the boat was right underneath.

"Have you come looking for that fellow that was living in the hut?" he cried. "Gone—heard him shouting yesterday—gone mad. Shaking his fist at us—what you say? Mad, I tell you. Running about, shaking his fist at us. Saw him jump into the sea and swim out and go under. Sharks got him—What you say? Yes—saw it. Who was he?"

"Man from Grande Anse," replied Le Moan.

"Well, he's dead," cried the other. "It was yesterday—got any cigarettes, we're running short."

But Le Moan was a non-smoker.

He held on for a moment, giving whatever news he had about the mainland.

Out here with the green water washing up the stone of the lighthouse front, the great white desolate building dominated and discoloured the sea, hardened the sunlight, and gave a winter touch to the mewing and crying of the gulls.

Nature refused it, and the human mind through whose agency it had been born, rejected it. That it saved men's lives,

and directed shipping in a useful way, was a fact, but it had no warmth.

On the mainland it would have been nothing, but set in this desolation of distance, it made the loneliness around it shout.

Le Moan pushed off, and setting the boat's sail, steered back for Martinique.

The stores in the hut he left for decay to deal with; and the soul of Jean to the mercy of his Maker.

The sword of Justice had fallen, and the incident was for ever closed.

Arrived at home, he took the three thousand francs of M. Robert from a drawer, and counted them.

The provisions and bedding, and other things with which he had stocked the hut, had been taken from his own stores.

He had chosen to leave them at Sombrero, so this just man determined not to charge for them.

The money belonged really to no one; not to Fernand, who had only been the messenger who had brought it, nor to M. Robert, who, Fernand said, had paid it for the release of Jean's claims on the café; nor to him, Le Moan, who had only held it in trust for Jean.

Jean, however, might have relations.

Whatever hard things one may say about money, it has at least the power of finding out relations for a man.

Le Moan determined to take the money to M. Robert, and leave it in his charge, so accordingly, next day, early, before the sun had fully laid a finger on Pelée, or the cabri-bois ceased its singing in the woods, Le Moan boarded the early stage and started for St. Pierre.

XIII

The market that morning was busy with more than business.

Fernand Pellisser had been arrested the day before, on suspicion.

Suspicion of what?

Suspicion of having had a hand (possibly) in the disappearance of Jean Gastin; of having possibly done away with him.

The Chief of Police had moved to the arrest after much weighing of pros and cons, sifting of evidence, cigarette smoking and reflection on the sexual aspect of the matter.

The man was jealous of Jean, Mayotte had made that quite clear. All the rest followed quite naturally on that.

Jean had sent for Fernand by the porteuse for some reason or another, he had gone to meet Jean, and had come back to St. Pierre.

Now attend: Immediately on coming back he had thrown up his business and prepared for flight.

It is all quite simple.

When Fernand had been arrested at the café which he frequented, and had been told the charge, how did he meet it?

He had burst out laughing.

He had laughed and laughed. He had given no explanation, refused to say anything, called M. Patrigent an old goat, and gone to prison with his hands in his pockets.

Jester to the last, that was what he had done. No doubt when they came to cut his head off for his crime he would be laughing still.

St. Pierre was very sore on the matter.

It is bad enough to murder a man, but to laugh over the business is worse.

St. Pierre would have stormed the gaol and lynched its jester, only that it was naturally lazy and given to talk more than action; besides, to kill him now off-hand would have

robbed it of possibilities of endless chatter, and the delight of the trial when it came on, and of the execution.

The cake was worth keeping.

Meanwhile it could be talked about, and they were talking about it in the market-place this morning, without in the least interfering with the general work of buying and selling and cheating.

Through the market-place came the dark figure of Le Moan.

He wanted to buy some osier baskets to take back with him to Mirail, and he had no eyes or ears for anything else. He was practically unknown, and had a deep contempt for the townsfolk and their ways.

Having bought his baskets, he made for the house of M. Robert, to hand him over the money, and, having done that, he would return by the stage to his home.

M. Robert was in.

He was an invalid, of the type that cannot attend to business matters if they are of a worrying nature.

The little coloured girl, having made enquiries, said that Missie Robert was in bed, very unwell, but would the gentleman say what he wanted.

"Tell him I have brought him some money," replied Le Moan.

He was instantly, on the delivery of the message, shown into a room where an old gentleman, like a fox without the saving grace of fur and brush, sat in a cane easy chair, smoking a Cuban cigar, and reading the shipping news in the *Patrie*.

"You are Monsieur Robert," said Le Moan.

"That is my name," replied the other.

"Then will you count these," said Le Moan curtly, taking the roll of notes from his pocket.

"Three thousand francs—please verify it."

The fox, mystified, yet complacent, entered upon the delightful task.

"Three thousand," said he at last. "Yes?"

"It is the money you sent to Jean Gastin," said Le Moan.

"Jean Gastin," answered the other, "but I did not send him any money."

"You sent him three thousand francs by Fernand Pellisser."

"No, Monsieur," replied the invalid. "Fernand Pellisser called upon me requesting three thousand francs on account of Jean Gastin, but I had not the money to give him—besides, I suspected him."

Le Moan, who knew nothing of what had been going on in St. Pierre, nor of the arrest of Fernand, passed the last remark by.

He stood astonished.

He did not like M. Robert. He liked very few people, but even if he had not suffered from that limitation he would not have liked M. Robert.

"Then give me those notes back," said he. "If you did not send them they are, of course, not yours."

He took the bundle from the hand of the other, and, putting it in his pocket, turned to leave the room, seek Fernand, and solve the mystery.

"Stop," said M. Robert, "all this seems to me very strange."

"Well," said Le Moan, "as a matter of fact, I cannot understand it. I am going to Fernand to find out—I expect he will be somewhere in the market-place, though I did not see him as I went through it."

"But do you not know that Fernand is in prison?"

"In prison—what for?"

"Why, to be sure, for the suspected murder of Jean Gastin—did you not know?"

"The murder of Jean?"

"Yes."

"But Jean has not been murdered."

"Then what has happened to him?"

"Never mind what has happened to him," said Le Moan, irritated, and now completely out of patience. "That is for me to tell to the fool that has put him in prison. Who is he?"

"M. Patrigent, the Chief of Police," said Robert.

Le Moan turned and left the room, and the little servant, having let him out of the house, hearing a cry, ran to her master's room.

The invalid was seriously ill.

The feel of those precious banknotes between his fingers was still with him. They had been his for a moment, fallen from the sky, in his hand, and—if only he had said nothing and kept them, he could have said that he misunderstood—that he was deaf, that he *had* sent them to Jean. It is true that he had already declared publicly that Fernand had called on him for the money, and that he had refused the sum; all the same he might, if challenged, have said that this was a mistake. He would have had time to think and plan before authority intervened—possibly it never would have intervened. He could have been very ill, and unable to think or do business till Fernand was hanged—and then everything would have been all right.

The whole business was grievous.

Yet it might still be retrieved! The thought was better than the brandy that the little maid fetched him.

But both were good, and having drunk the brandy, he ordered the maid to run and have his goat carriage fetched.

"Swiftly!" said M. Robert, "for I have to go to the Prefecture."

XIV

Le Moan, in the street, made for the Rue Royale, where the Police Office was.

There he found M. Patrigent, in a temper. Monsieur P. had been called an old goat by Fernand, and somehow he knew that the label would stick to him. It was unpleasant enough being labelled an old goat, but the unpleasantness was accentuated by the fact that the bill-sticker was a murderer.

Monsieur P. wanted Fernand's blood, and wanted it badly, and as soon as possible.

When the creole office clerk came to him and said that a man had called from the Grande Anse district with regard to the disappearance of Jean Gastin, the Chief of Police ordered the visitor to be shown in at once.

Entered Le Moan, carrying his baskets. There were six of them, all squashed together, and tied with a piece of coconut sennit.

"Well?" said the Chief. "What is it?"

"I have come," said Le Moan, "about Fernand Pellisser. You have put him in prison?"

"Yes."

"Then you must let him out."

"Oh ho!" said M. Patrigent. "So I must let him out."

"He did not kill Jean Gastin," went on the other. "Jean Gastin killed himself." He told the story of Jean as we know it—everything, including the fact that Fernand had fetched the three thousand francs from St. Pierre.

"What proof have you of the story of Jean Gastin's death?" asked the Chief, after a moment's mental consultation.

"Proof!" cried Le Moan. "Why, the lighthouse-keepers can give you proof enough if you won't take my word; also my housekeeper at Mirail can prove that Jean stayed with me, and left on the afternoon of the eleventh of last month. Oh, I can give proof enough. The only thing I don't understand is that Fernand said he obtained the three thousand francs for Jean's support from M. Robert, of the Rue Lafontaine. I called upon M. Robert just now to return

the money, as it is no longer wanted, and he told me that he had not given it to Fernand."

"Ah, ha!"

"Yes—where, then, did Fernand get the money?"

As if in answer came the bleating of a goat from outside. M. Patrigent got up and looked through the window.

A goat carriage was drawn up at the pavement. It was M. Robert's. In shape it was like a little victoria, with two goats in the traces, led by a coloured boy.

The sight of the goats did not improve M. Patrigent's temper, nor did the sight of their owner, who was shown in.

The goat owner had come to explore, to feel the situation, prepared at any opportunity to say, "Ah, *now* I remember. Yes, it is true that I handed the money to Fernand, but my mind becomes a blank at times," etc.

He was unprepared for the reception that awaited him, prepared for by his goats, also by the fact that M. Patrigent, like Le Moan, did not care for him.

"Ah, you have called," burst out the Chief, as the invalid entered, and the door closed on him. "What is this you say about Fernand Pelliser? Did he call upon you asking for a sum of three thousand francs on behalf of Jean Gastin, and on what date?"

"On the eleventh of last month, Monsieur," replied the other. "It is true he called, but——"

"No 'buts,' please. He called upon you on the eleventh of last month at what time?"

"In the morning, Monsieur."

"Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes—go on—one might fancy you had something to hide. He called on you and asked you for three thousand francs. Three thousand francs. You have told this man Le Moan that you did not give Fernand Pelliser the three thousand francs he asked for on behalf of Jean Gastin. Now, take care of what you say."

"Monsieur!"

"Don't answer me. Listen to me now. Fernand Pelliser stated to this man that you did give him the money, you say you didn't. Fernand I believe, from evidence just submitted to me, is guiltless of the crime alleged against him—an honest man. Why should he say that he received the money from you if he didn't?"

"Well, he didn't," replied the other, now perplexed and frightened. "I told him I had not the sum, that only by my little economies was it possible for me to live. Then he said, 'Well, I must go to M. Bartholome.'"

"The money-lender in the Rue Victor Hugo?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

M. Patrigent called a clerk.

"Send at once for M. Bartholome, whose office is in the Rue Victor Hugo," said he.

Ten minutes later M. Bartholome, a Jew, with oily curls, was shown in.

"Did you," asked the Chief of Police, "have an interview with the man Fernand Pelliser on the morning of Tuesday, the eleventh day of last month?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"About a money matter?"

"Yes, Monsieur. He required three thousand francs. I could not lend him that sum, but we made an agreement, and I bought his boat and the goodwill of his stall for three thousand francs, which I handed to him. Everyone knew that he sold me his business, owing, no doubt, to his anxiety to leave Martinique, to escape from the consequences of his crime."

M. Patrigent called his clerk, and ordered that Fernand should be brought from the prison at once, for an interview.

Ten minutes later Fernand appeared, unconcerned, and seeming inclined to whistle.

"Fernand Pelliser," said M. Patrigent, "for the sake of a man who was your rival, with whom you had quarrelled, but who was in sore distress, you called on M. Robert to advance

or give the sum of three thousand francs. Failing to obtain them from him, you went to M. Bartholome, and sold your business, and so obtained the money for your sick enemy. A noble act. An act that deserves enshrining in literature."

In his enthusiasm the old gentleman had quite forgotten all about goats.

Fernand listened, abashed, for the first time in his life. For the first time in his life ashamed of himself.

Incapable of blushing, he stood in his distress, his eyes wandering about the floor, whilst the Chief, handing him back the bundle of notes, continued his talk, telling him of the death of Jean, and proposing, over his left shoulder, that M. Bartholome should render back Fernand's business for the sum he had paid for it.

Bartholome was willing, but not Fernand.

To live and carry on business in St. Pierre under a new and false character was beyond him. To be honoured as a hero, in an atmosphere of respect, was an impossible idea.

He would stifle.

He was a jester and a light liar and a bit of a cheat, a child of the sun incapable of seriousness; the serious action he had committed that deserved "enshrining in literature" had not been done by him—or at least only done under the influence of Mayotte, as a man might commit an action contrary to his nature under the influence of drink.

He could not live in St. Pierre under its cloud.

In the event he lived at Mirail, going into partnership with Le Moan—and Mayotte; who worshipped him for the action which she herself had inspired, an action which in the end proved the salvation of them both, for Mirail was not touched on that morning when Pelée, waking from sleep, wiped St. Pierre utterly away.

The Rue Victor Hugo and the Place Bertin; the crowds of the market square and the washerwomen by the Rivière Roxelane; the palms of the Jardin Publique and the Prefect of Police; M. Robert and the goats that drew his carriage.

ROSEMONDE

I

I was in St. Pierre a year or so before that fatal day when Pelée erupted, destroying the city utterly and all but one of the ships at anchor in the bay.

It was the season of the *renouveau*, the magic season of the tropic spring, and Pelée sat with his head turbaned in cloud presiding over a land filled with the music of waters and the beauty and freshness of growing things.

Life in the little coloured city in those early days of the new season was more than pleasant. The clapping back of the green window shutters to let in the freshness of morning, the sea wind blowing in the angelins and palms, the smell of coffee, snatches of song, voices, street cries, laughter of children—it all comes back to me with a blaze of sunlight and—between the lemon-tinted houses a hint of the blinding blueness of the sea.

And the face of Monsieur Belchambre.

He was the handsomest old man I have ever met, of the type that Imperial Rome bequeathed as a legacy to the Latin races, courtly, amiable and lovable.

It is not often you meet all that in one personality.

Always exquisitely dressed but seemingly by some tailor of another day, he belonged by suggestion to Paris, the Paris of Tortonis and the Boulevard de Gand, yet he was a Martiniquan born and bred.

The Belchambres had been rooted in the island long before the terrible revolution of the blacks, their sugar plantations had made them rich and fortunately a good deal of their money had been invested in English securities by Pierre Louis Belchambre, my friend's grandfather. He had no estates now, but an income that enabled him to live comfortably in a house with a terraced garden just above St. Pierre, where the road that leads to Morne Rouge began.

II

Here after dinner one night, as we sat drinking our coffee and smoking, with the fireflies lighting up above the flowers in answer to the lamps of St. Pierre lighting up below, M. Belchambre said all at once, apropos of the forms of a man and a girl linked and walking on the road just visible below:

"Still it goes on!"

I laughed and agreed. It was going on from the high woods to the sea, and would be going on beneath the

children and great-grandchildren of those garden palms and those balisiers of the high woods up there where the tree frogs were singing beneath the moon.

But M. Belchambre was not thinking of the eternity of love, but of the strangeness of lovers, and he had in his mind to tell me the strangest love story I have ever heard.

"Those cold whites," said he, "all those people over there in your America and Europe, know little about love. Lust, yes, and affection, yes; but Love as it can sometimes grow in these enchanted islands, no. How could they imagine the flowers of the *grands bois*, the wickedness of the fer de lance, those centipedes half as long as one's arm, those passions of the mind exotic and extraordinary as the reptiles and the flowers?" He paused for a moment, and went on: "I will tell you a story; confide it, rather, for one of the actors in it is still alive and living in St. Pierre. It has to do with the past, and the old La Fontaine plantation that still lies up there beyond the Morne Rouge, but gone to decay, the cornfields no longer tilled, the sugar mills silent, and haunted only by lizards, and scorpions as large as your hand.

III

"Many years ago a young man, whom we will call Louis, lived over at the other side of the island near Grande Anse; he was an only son and his father was a landowner, one of

the old French stock, belonging to a family settled in the island long before the French Revolution.

"Their estates ran by the Rivière Falaise, and Louis, who managed for his father, had not much idle time on his hands. The growing of sugar cane is not a simple business, and that was only part of the work calling for his attention; there was the cutting and crushing and sugar refining to say nothing of the rum making. The estate also produced cocoa and chocolate and maize—a big affair which was, however, not too big for his hands owing to the fact that he had two very efficient overseers.

"He never looked at the women. There were beautiful girls to be had for the asking, chabines, quarteronnes, griffes, either on the estate or at La Grande Anse, but Louis had no eyes for them; that sort of love was not his way, he had, in fact, no ideas at all of love, no more than has the angelin, which is the male palmiste.

"Yet just as in the angelin, which is a man-tree, there was that in Louis which only awaited opportunity for development, and when he was twenty-three years of age one day it came.

"One day, called by business to St. Pierre, he mounted his horse and took the great national road La Trace. You know that road, perhaps of all roads in the world the most wonderful, mounting to the purple mornes, falling to the valleys and the cane fields, here showing glimpses of the blue sea and again marching through the high woods with

their great cedars and torrential shadows above which the acomats and towering mahoganys find the sky.

"Nearing Morne Rouge he reached the La Fontaine plantation.

"The road here takes a bend, blue-black gommiers, and giant tree ferns line it on the right, and the razie creeps out from the trees like a carpet, ground vines and heaven knows what in the way of low-growing things trying to fight and kill the road.

"Rounding the bend Louis came on a picture suddenly revealed, tragic and unforgettable. A girl in white on a black rearing horse, a yellow snake curled around the horse's off fore-leg, the head of the snake thrown back ready to strike with the awful mouth wide open like the jaws of a pincers.

"The girl was hitting at the snake with a whip.

"Next moment Louis was beside her, he swept her from the saddle in the bend of his arm, just as, maddened by the fangs of the fer de lance that had got home near the shoulder, her horse bent at the withers before straightening like a bow to dash away.

"The snake flicked away amidst the razie like a yellow whip thong, the hoof beats of the maddened horse ceased as it broke from the high road to the shelter of the woods.

"Above in the delicate frondage of the balisiers, a siffleur de montagne broke into song.

"It was thus that Louis met Rosemonde La Fontaine, a tragic meeting in a setting of tragedy and beauty.

IV

"She was lovely. She was youth. A creature that it seemed impossible age should ever touch. Also she was miraculous in a way which I shall presently explain.

"Did Louis love her? Does a stone fall to the ground when you release it from your hand? Yes, it was just as though they had been born one for the other, and the La Fontaines were well content.

"Of that family there was only Rosemonde, her father, her grandmother and her sister Celestine.

"Celestine at that time was staying with a relation at Fort de France, and during the first weeks of the courtship when Celestine was mentioned there would be a laugh.

"There was something mysterious about Celestine, something they seemed hiding from him.

"Once the grandmother, speaking of the beauty of Rosemonde, said, 'Ah, but you should see Celestine.'

"'She cannot be more beautiful,' said Louis.

"'No, but she is as beautiful,' replied the old lady.

"When he approached Rosemonde on the subject, she only gave him a dark glance with half a smile in it. The thought of Celestine seemed to cast a shadow over her. She would only say, 'You will see.'

V

"One day, it was the end of the hivernage and the new spring was in sight—one day Louis, calling at the La Fontaine house, found an atmosphere of stir and pleasant confusion.

"In the great drawing-room with its furniture of the time of the fourteenth Louis, a girl's hat lay cast upon a couch, and a little travelling bag of violet-coloured leather stood half-open by the table, where stood a great bowl filled with the flowers of the Lossiele bois.

"The grandmother was seated in her chair by one of the windows, and the first thing she said was 'Celestine has arrived.'

"'Ah,' said Louis, laughing, 'Mademoiselle Celestine has arrived, well, now we shall see,' and as he spoke the words the door opened and Rosemonde came in.

"'Celestine,' said the old lady, 'this is he, look at him, is he not good to look upon—your future brother-in-law.'

"Then it all came out. The unspeakable, absolute, absurd likeness. They were twins—and that was the joke!

VI

"Twins, yes, but they were one, at least in no little detail did they differ.

"I must tell you that the La Fontaines were not pure stock. Pierre Ambrose, the great grandfather, had married a quadroon, and from her came a touch of strangeness, a tropical fire and softness that was a thing in itself, an essence permeating form and manner and voice. They showed it equally, their voices were the same, and if there was any difference between them it was only that Celestine was a shade more sedate, more serious than Rosemonde.

"But, mark you, there was a difference between the two girls. No two things in the world are exactly alike. But it was a difference masked for the eyes of a white man by the tropical something which lay in their touch of coloured blood. You know to a white all Chinese faces seem the same owing to the race bar, and so, in a way, the coloured touch makes for similarity between two people of the race.

"All the same to the grandmother before she became half-blind the difference was clear, much clearer than to the father, a man of unobservant nature who was always mistaking the girls one for the other owing to what he called 'This jest of Nature.'

"But this jest of Nature which the family took in good part was not a laughing matter for Louis. After the first shock, and his recovery from it, things went on, it is true, as before, but, all the same, there was a difference.

"It was as though the woman he loved had divided herself into two.

"The appalling similarity between the two girls had produced a situation absolutely unique, but far from damping his ardour the fact seemed to feed the flame of his passion, filling his mind with the strangest ideas.

"But things were moving in another direction. He saw or thought he saw a change in Rosemonde. It seemed to him that she had grown jealous of Celestine, and now came to his mind like the shadow of future trouble the thought of what might happen in the future owing to the jealousy of Rosemonde.

"The most extraordinary jealousy in the world, for it was jealousy of the likeness.

"'If Louis loves me, then he must love her, because she is me—at all events to his eyes.'

"That seemed her train of reasoning, also she fancied that Celestine had fallen in love with Louis. She said nothing of all this, but he could tell her thoughts.

"However, the marriage day was drawing near, a day that would resolve many things.

VII

"You can scarcely picture an old-time marriage in Martinique. Day by day we have changed, and many old customs have gone.

"Even after the terrible rebellion of the blacks, and the freeing of the slaves, many plantations like that of La Fontaine, still held to some of their traditions, and the hands retained many of their faithful and lovable qualities; this was so at the time I am speaking of, and the marriage of Louis and Rosemonde La Fontaine promised to be not only brilliant but also one of those family affairs where the family includes the whole of the workers and retainers of a large estate.

"There was to be a holiday for all, a dinner for the hands, games and fireworks in the evening, to send off the bride and bridegroom, whose wedding night would be spent at the house a relation had lent them in St. Pierre.

"These happy plans were born, however, only to be wrecked. Fate intervened.

"You must know that near the La Fontaine mansion, hidden from the house by a belt of trees, there was a lake.

"A lake like a lost sapphire, lonely and blue and beautiful, innocent-seeming yet deadly, because of springs that towards the centre sent up eruptions of ice-cold water; inshore and washing the marble steps of the bathing place, which stood shadowed by a great balisier, the water was tepid, and there were seasons when the whole of the water was of an equable temperature, but one never knew when the cold springs were playing, and when a swimmer swimming too far out might not be seized by cramp or receive a chill deathly in this climate. . . . Well, on the day before the marriage of Louis and Rosemonde she came here to bathe with Celestine. The two girls were alone.

"What happened there was told by Rosemonde, returning home, running, breathless, still in her bathing dress covered only with a wrap, told only in these terrible words, 'She is drowned.'

"It seems from the details she gave later, that the girls, having amused themselves for a while swimming close to the shore, struck out further across the blue smiling water. Celestine went too far, and Rosemonde, who had turned towards the shore, heard her cry for help.

"It was too late.

"A hand showed above the water surface, then there was nothing but a ripple marking where the struggle had been.

"Louis, who was at home over at Grande Anse making his last preparations for the marriage, received the news almost at once; one of the plantation hands mounted on a swift horse brought it to him. You can imagine!

"Well, well, it is always the unexpected that comes in this life.

"The marriage was, of course, postponed, and to postpone a marriage is always unlucky.

"It took place two months later without any ceremony or rejoicing; all the same Louis was happy, the stain on the past had almost died away for him, and Rosemonde giving herself up entirely to his love seemed like a being re-born.

"Yes, there seemed no cloud on their future.

"But the human mind is a thing ever questing, never satisfied, and to the mind of Louis one day came a thought as he watched his wife in the garden playing with a little dog that he had bought for her.

"'Did she really care for Celestine?'

"That was the thought, and it was born not only of the happy figure before his eyes but of the recollection of how she had appeared the day after the tragedy, so calm, so quiet, as if stunned—and yet now looking back not only at that day

but at the intervening time was there evidence of real grief? He remembered her jealousy owing to the likeness.

"He had let his imagination stray so far when he pulled it back sharply. Such a doubt was disloyalty to the woman he loved. He hated himself for the thought.

"A woman who could not feel real grief for the death of a sister under such circumstances—what would she be?

"Louis had brought her home to the house of his father on the estate near Grande Anse, the house had been redecorated in part, but a great deal remained to be done, and he had left it so purposefully, that his wife might have a say in the matter. The gardens were the same, very old-fashioned and rather neglected they awaited his wife's decision as to the redisposition of the beds and so forth.

"She was not slow in taking charge of these matters. In her new environment and vested with the power he gave her over affairs, her character developed. It is often so in marriage.

"Marriage, in fact, is a house of incubation in which the egg of a young girl's character brings to life qualities often surprising to the husband.

"In Rosemonde harder characteristics than he had suspected seemed to show themselves, especially in her dealings with the servants and hands, also a determination and self-will that might have made for unhappiness between them had his character been harder and more resistant.

"As things were he gave way, and so they went on for five years without a ripple on the surface of affairs, just as on the La Fontaine lake there is nothing to show of the deathly springs that play beneath the mirror of the still blue water.

"The marriage was childless.

VIII

"Just as on the La Fontaine lake periodically the clouds cast a shadow on the water, so in these five years periodically a gloom seemed to take possession of Rosemonde. It was always at the same season and time—that is to say, shortly before the anniversary of their marriage day, that is to say, at the time of the tragedy of the lake.

"One night, just at this season, Louis was aroused from sleep by a voice from his wife's room.

"The two rooms were adjoining, and the door between them was open.

"The voice seemed raised in dispute.

"He left his bed, and coming to the open door saw in the vague light of the moon shining through the jalousies Rosemonde, half-raised in her bed, and seeming to thrust something away from her. Then came her voice again: 'You

shall not have him—no, you shall not, never—never——Ah—there.'

"She raised herself fully, then sank back as if exhausted.

"He returned to his room.

"He knew that she had been talking in her sleep to Celestine.

"And now came back to him the old question of her jealousy, followed by a more terrible question that he dared scarcely envisage. What had happened on that fatal day?

"The antagonism in the voice of the sleeper, her action in pushing some unseen thing away, the remembrance of her jealousy and that fact which he knew full well from their marriage life, that jealousy, with her, was a brooding passion—all this came to him, joined with the terrible question that none could answer but Rosemonde herself.

"And he could not ask.

"With the daylight his mind returned to itself. It was nothing. Without doubt in the dream state she had harked back to that time before her marriage and picked up the old mind condition due to the fatal likeness.

"That was quite enough. No doubt in those pre-marriage days she had often been troubled with the thought of his love for her being possibly attenuated by the resemblance to her of Celestine. The dream condition which distorts as well as recalls had made her cry out as though in dispute or anger.

"That was all.

"Yes, but the logical mind of man does not live alone, it lives with a mind that is illogical.

"This infernal partnership it is that will always prevent Reason from preventing War, Love from overcoming Suspicion and Hate.

"Despite what Louis told himself there remained in his mind a stain that could not be removed, a stain that coloured everything.

"You know in the tropics fancy grows with the fierce rapidity of the Lossiele Vine. The negro mind will tell you that; this weed, which can be terrible and out of all proportion to the seeds it grows from, was trying to take possession of the mind of Louis, he would cut it and stamp on it only to find it sprouting again. He saw pictures of Celestine drowning and of Rosemonde pushing her down, and every little bad point in Rosemonde, her self-will, her hardness at times, her seeming inability to find sympathy for the servants and hands, all fed by the weed of fancy, seemed to point to that picture.

"He was unhappy, but things were moving, and Fate preparing to speak.

IX

"One day, getting on for the sixth anniversary of their marriage, Rosemonde, who had gone for a drive on the road that leads towards the sea, was caught in one of those sudden storms which sometimes come just after the season of the north-east winds. Despite the cover of the carriage, which the coachman raised, she was drenched.

"That night she was seized with a shivering fit, by dawn she was in a high fever, and a man was sent riding at all speed to Grande Anse for the doctor.

"The doctor's name was Perrichaud, an old man wise in the diseases of the island and the tricks of its climate.

"When he had seen the patient he took Louis aside.

"It was pneumonia, a grave case affecting both lungs. 'But she has youth on her side,' said the doctor, 'so we must hope for the best.' Ah, that was terrible.

"'We must hope for the best!'

"Then day came after day till at last came an evening that was to be the end of it all. She had awakened from a moment of drowsiness, and had sent for Louis, and as he knelt beside her she said:

"'I am dying. I know it—I want to say—listen. From the first moment I loved you as I love you now. I was jealous of

her—I saw her drown, I tried to reach and help her, I could not, but I could not find grief in my heart for her.'

"The words were torture to the unhappy man. She was innocent of what he had imagined, the tears ran down his face. She went on:

"'I could not grieve for her—because she loved you.'

"Ah! that was new. So Celestine had loved him—what a fatality! he had never suspected that the dead girl had felt like that for him. No wonder that Rosemonde, discovering the fact, had felt jealousy.

"'Then,' she went on with her dying voice, 'I was guilty of deceit. I had to pretend grief and a greater deceit for the love of you, for all these years I have had to keep it up.'

"'But, Rosemonde,' said the unhappy man. 'You could not help it, it was not your fault that for the love of me you have done anything; that which you have done for love can never be wicked. Love makes beautiful all things.'

"A light came into her eyes almost of happiness.

"'Rosemonde,' he murmured. She gazed at him, her lips moved, and across the void of death that had opened between them, faint like an echo came the whisper:

"'I am not Rosemonde—I am Celestine!'

* * * * *

"And I," finished Monsieur Belchambre, "was Louis—but all that was many years ago."

He ceased, and through the warm night and the wind in the angelins and palms came from below the far-off whisper of the city and the sea.

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[The end of *Love on the Adriatic* by Henry de Vere Stacpoole]