

THE HAND OF THE AVENGER

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN RECEIVES TWO ART-ADMIRERS.

And They are Slain by the Man to Whom She Was Lawfully Wedded—A Midnight Summons.

Sketchy Bits. Feodor Tersinski was a noble looking fellow with a cast of features more English than Russian, which was naturally enough seeing his mother had been an English woman.

He was the only child of the "White Star" among the art students at Roma at the time when I formed one of that illustrious body; so, considering that he was half one of us by birth, it was not surprising that he chummed with the children of his mother. He was tall and broad-shouldered, his hair and beard were of a golden brown, and his eyes were of the darkest blue I ever saw, except in those of a very young child.

One day the women in Rome were in love with him, but he kept perfectly heart-whole and as far as I knew—and I was his greatest friend—had never had an affair of the heart in his life.

One morning as I entered the Cafe, I went to get my breakfast I found myself seated alone at one of the little parrot-topped tables, and noticed that he looked pale, and at the same time seemed restless and excited.

He saw me nearly as soon as I did him, and beckoned me over to his table. "I have something to tell you," he whispered as I took my seat, "but not here. Finish your breakfast and we'll go out. I shall be better in the open air."

He smoked one cigarette after another while I ate my cutlet and drank my black coffee, when he seized my arm and hurried me out into the street.

Now that we were alone together, however, he seemed in no hurry to unburden himself. After wandering through several more or less muddy and dirty thoroughfares and alleys, we found ourselves in a little deserted square, at one end of which was a fine old Roman palace, now transformed into a second-class modern hotel.

There were a few chairs in tubs along the door, and among them some little white-topped tables.

We seated ourselves at one of these, and Feodor called for a bottle of white wine.

"My throat's on fire," he said as he drained his glass. "I had a strange adventure last night. I have met my fate. Don't laugh, man! I tell you I met the sweetest woman that a penniless artist ever met, and in the strangest manner, too."

He pulled a little sketch book from his pocket and placed it open in my hands.

"What think you of that face?" he asked. "It's drawn from memory only."

"It was certainly a lovely face—the hair tinted a ruddy brown, and the eyes dark and lustrous. What was more, I recognized it at once."

"Why? I exclaimed. "It's a sketch of 'La Bella Veneziana'?"

I referred to the soprano at a little theatre, much frequented by art students in Rome at that time, a girl whom she had named after her birthplace. Many of us had tried to become better acquainted, but she had refused all invitations to suppers and parties, and even her comrades at the life, except a little or nothing about her life, except that she lived in quiet rooms in the Piazza Uovoa, with an old patrona who some said was her mother, others no relation at all.

"I congratulate you, my dear fellow," I went on to say, "without a little touch of jealousy. Here have we all been trying to obtain an introduction to the signorina, and you have cut us all out."

man, not more than three or four and twenty, I should say. The eyes were closed, but there was a slight contraction about one corner of the mouth as if he had died in a sudden spasm of pain.

"I hardly know why I did it, but I drew the sheet still further down and opened the dead man's shirt. I was right in my surmise. Right over the heart was a dagger wound. He had been stabbed, and his death must have been instantaneous.

"Guilty replacing the sheet till only the face, neck and upper parts of the chest were exposed, I set to work. "There was ample light, six great wax torches burned beside the bed, two on either side and two at the foot."

"I must have been working above two hours when I suddenly became aware that a woman was standing on the other side of the couch.

"I looked across at her and our eyes met. "Dio! Shall I ever forget her face? "You have seen her, Basil, but on the stage. My poor sketch gives but the shadow of her loveliness."

"It was not merely the beauty of outline or of feature. It was the ineffable sweetness, goodness, and genius that beamed from her eyes, that pervaded the whole face. And when she spoke, her voice was low and sweet, like the sighing of the summer breeze among the pine trees of my home."

"How long she had been in the room before I was aware of her presence I do not know. But now she stooped and kissed the cold forehead of the dead man, and came round the foot of the bed and stood beside me."

"It is very good of you to have done this for me," she said, "a kindness which, though nothing I can do will repay, I shall always remember. I was his wife, signor. You will believe that, will you not? But this sketch of yours, signor, will allow me to have to recall our short summer of happiness. If his family but knew of our marriage and found me here I should be thrown from yonder window as certain as heaven would punish their crime hereafter. But you need not fear. The servant is bribed and keeps watch. And now one more favor. This sketch of your face so that it may seem as if he had slept, and would awaken when the first light of morning stole into our chamber; and, signor, Maria Verchenci will pray you and think of you with gratitude every time she looks on the portrait of him she loved."

"There is little more to tell you, Basil. I painted on as she knelt beside the bed, scarce knowing what I did, till suddenly I was alone, and the sketch as finished as I dared hope to make it."

"I was as finished that I sketched in my book her face from memory. Say what you like, Basil—argue as you may—every man has his fate; and I have met mine, but to lose her again as soon as found. I sat alone with the dead for company—ay, and envied him, too; for she still loved him. I went till the man who had brought me to the house again made his appearance, still muffled in his cloak. He took charge of the portrait and then conducted me—my eyes closed as before—down the stairs and into the carriage, which had remained in waiting."

"Half an hour later I was again in my chamber. The half-finished design for the church window still lay half completed on the table, but what a change had taken place in my life since I had put down the pen! I tell you, Basil, that hope alone makes life bearable. Drink, man! drink to hope—a lover's sheet-anchor, a poor man's last friend!"

We finished the bottle, and I did my utmost to cheer Feodor up, telling him that La Bella Veneziana would forget the dead, like others had done before her.

After a while he became more cheerful and confident as to the future. However, the next day he was more dispirited than ever, for Maria Verchenci had returned from Rome, leaving no clew by which he might hope to find her. Nor during the next twelve months did we hear any news of her. At the end of that time Feodor had to leave Rome, as the three years' sojourn there, a prize gained at his academy, was at an end, and he had no means of his own.

His last words to me were: "Fate is stronger than reason. She and I will meet again—and so shall we. I know it. I feel certain of it."

It was ten years after this time; Rome and its students' life was a dream of the past. It was the 1st of May, and I was a happy man, for was not my picture accepted and hung? As I walked through the rooms of the Royal Academy, I glanced with a certain amount of indifference at the works of art on either side, for I could think of nothing but my own picture, and my feet, in spite of myself, continually brought me back to stand in front of it.

In noticed a dense crowd of people in front of a certain picture, and without feeling any great interest in the subject found myself one of the crowd.

It was the portrait of a most lovely woman, a great celebrity, too; the woman, a great beauty of the season, the Signora Verchenci.

I had seen the name a score of times in print without recalling any remembrance in particular to my mind; but now something in the face or expression brought back the past like a flash, and I remembered the little riverside theater at Roma and Feodor Tersinski's infatuation and romantic midnight adventure.

I looked at the catalogue. Yes, he was the painter of the portrait, the painter of what promised to be the most successful picture in that year's Academy. I was turning away, when a hand was laid on my shoulder, and I looked round to find Feodor standing beside me. We shook hands, and were chums again in a minute.

ture was not only sold, but had gained the great city prize.

"A greater surprise still awaited me on my return to my rooms. It was a note asking me to call on the buyer of my picture, and giving the address of one of the principal hotels."

"I went, and there I found, as you have already guessed, the purchaser was none other than Maria herself—Maria, no longer the unknown artist of a student-haunted theater, but Maria Verchenci, the world-famed soprano, the prima donna absolute of every capital in Europe. She welcomed me like an old friend, and gradually, Basil, that friendship has warmed into love, and we are to be married when the London opera season is over. That, Basil, is the history of the last ten years—ten years of toil and hardship repaid twice over by the happiness of the present. Now, old friend, tell me yours, and let me congratulate you in my turn."

"But tell me," I said, "tell me who was the murdered man and how came he by his death?"

"His name? I have promised Maria not to tell, suffice it he was of the oldest Roman nobility. He was stabbed by a man who loved her passionately; a native of Venice—her birthplace—who had followed her to Rome, and had sworn to kill her if she refused to marry him. Now she goes about in terror of this man, although she has not seen his face for years—in terror for me, you understand, not for her self."

So after all fate had triumphed over every reasonable probability, and brought these two together again, to make one another's lives happy or miserable as it might chance.

"What is fate? I asked myself as I left Feodor's lodgings the evening before his marriage. "Is it possible that a man or woman's future is mapped out before their birth? Was it decreed in heaven that Feodor and Maria should meet and marry, or is it all chance?"

I had just got so far in my meditations when a man suddenly stopped in front of me and raised his hat.

He was a tall, thin man, dressed in a rather shabby but well-kept suit, what seemed a bouquet done up in tissue paper in his hand.

"Pardon, sir," he said in a strong Italian accent. "Mr. Basil Chalice, I believe?"

"That is my name," I answered. "The friend of M. Feodor Tersinski?"

"I nodded. "I do come from the Signora Verchenci," he continued, "with a message and these," he added, holding up the flowers. "His hotel is yonder where you did come out of, is it not so?"

"I have forgotten the name," I answered. "He is staying there," I answered. "But how did you know my name?"

"The signora did mention your name to me more than once," he answered; "and I have seen you and M. Tersinski together."

"Oh, all right," I said carelessly. "You will find him at home, Good-day."

I walked on and the matter passed from my mind.

The next morning I was at the hotel by 10 o'clock, for I was Feodor's best man, and was to breakfast with him. There was no one in the hall, so I ran lightly up the stairs without waiting to be announced. Feodor's bedroom door was open, so I entered.

To my surprise there were two or three women servants in the room, and a man in a black coat bending over the bed.

I was by his side in a moment, and I think I knew, before I looked down on the face of my dead friend, what I should see.

Searching for a Model. To be selected as the one woman in all of Europe whose face and figure most closely tallied with the ideal of England's greatest painter is surely no empty honor. When the late-Sir Frederic Leighton, president of the Royal Academy and foremost among British artists, conceived the idea of his famous painting, "Cymon and Iphigenia," he sought in all quarters of the continent for a suitable model to pose as the sleeping maiden, now so familiar in his finished canvas. After a fruitless search of six months he came upon the incarnation of his soul's ideal in the capital of his native land. Curiously enough, he found the model he had so long sought behind the footlights of a theater.

She was Miss Dorothy Dene, a young woman of remarkable beauty, both in face and figure. Sir Frederic told her of his inspiration, the contemplated canvas and her fulfillment of his idea for the central figure. Miss Dene graciously consented to pose for him, and eight months later the artist's conception of a beautiful picture became a reality and was the most admired of all Sir Frederic's works.

Miss Dene is as perfect a type of Greek beauty as can be found at the present day. Every line of her face and figure is classical in the highest degree. She is rather above the average in height, has long, lithe limbs and an exquisitely molded bust. Her hair is curly and golden, and her lustrous eyes have the hue of violets. In addition to all these charms she is said to possess the most beautiful complexion of any woman in Europe. What wonder that such a superb creature inspired Sir Frederic to his greatest efforts?

Miss Dene continued to be Sir Frederic's model long after he had given "Cymon and Iphigenia" to the world. Her form and features can be readily recognized in a number of other works by the same artist. In Sir Frederic's painting of "Greek Girls Playing Ball" she is represented as the maiden who is catching the ball. This canvas notably displays the actress' exquisite figure. Miss Dene's shapely arms may be noted in "Summer Moon," another well known painting by Leighton.

A year or two before Sir Frederic's death he was gossiped in London that the artist was madly in love with his model, but that some obstacle or other was in the way of their marriage. Just what the obstacle was no one seemed to know. Possibly it was the disparity in their ages. Leighton, at the time of his death, about a year ago—was only 70 years old. Miss Dene is now about 28. Dorothy Dean visited the United States in 1893. She undertook the production of classical plays popular in England, but almost unknown on this side of the water. Little success attended the venture, and her tour was finally abandoned. In England Miss Dene enjoys much popularity. Not only does she reign supreme as a queen of beauty, but her histrionic ability, which is of no mean order, has won her the praise of notable critics and fellow-artists. She now lives with her four sisters, all of whom are remarkably pretty in a charming apartment in South Kensington, London, a section of the city colonized chiefly by artists and theatrical folk and quite as picturesque in many of its features as is the famous Quarter Latin of Paris.

Rested His Case "Wid de Lawd" They were going to try a colored man for stealing a quantity of raw cotton, and when the hour arrived I went up to the court-house to hear the case.

The prisoner was a man about forty years of age and had elected to plead his own case. The prosecution proved that the bag of cotton was found in his cabin and the property was fully identified as belonging to the owner of the compass. The prisoner asked no questions, but said he wanted to make a statement and rest his case "wid de Lawd." After awhile he was given an opportunity to speak, and he said:

"I have to say that I am the owner of 'leven o'clock at night, when a voice called out to me: 'Hold on, dar, Abram Jones! Yo' was a pore man an' yo' jest take 'long dis bag o' cotton to buy yo' shoes fur col' weather.' Den I take 'de bag' all at my feet an' den I took it home."

"Did you recognize the voice?" asked the Judge.

"No, sah; but I reckon it was an angel who spoke."

"Then why did you hide the bag when you got home?"

"Well, sah, just as I got frow de gate anoder voice tol' me dat I'd better hide de cotton fur a few days."

"Did you recognize that voice?"

"No, sah; but I den reckon it was a voice from heaben."

"And that's your defense, is it?"

"Yes, sah, Ise willin' to rest dis case in de Lawd's hands. De Lawd knows I neber stole dat cotton."

"Hater, den you have a lawyer?" suggested the Judge.

"No, sah, Ise been gwine ter church fur de las' fo'ty years, an' I'm restin' dis case right in de hands of de Lawd."

"I shall have to give you four months in jail, Abram Jones."

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Longest Railroad.

Scribner's for May. The dimensions of the undertaking are enormous. From Toboliabinsk, the western terminus, to Vladivostok, the present eastern terminus, the length is 4,741 1-3 miles; in other words, it is the longest railroad in the world, much the longest of Toboliabinsk, passing the southern edge of Russia's great Siberian dominion, through Ob and Krasnoyarsk to Irkutsk, then takes a sudden turn around the southern end of the great Lake Balkal, and follows the Amoor River along the northern boundary of Manchuria to Vladivostok. Until it reaches the Yenesei River, the road passes over a steppe country that renders the engineering very simple; but beyond that, in the vast mountain region above Tartary, the cost of construction has been heavy. When the three great railroad bridges are taken into account, Russia will pay at least \$175,000,000 for the privilege of reaching the Pacific. Her hands are always wanted to reach the sea. She is practically an inland country, with the Baltic frozen up half the year, and the Arctic and White Seas eternally blocked with Polar ice.

McKinley Needs No Pinkertons.

Philadelphia Inquirer. There is now sitting in the executive chair at Washington a man who is said to be the only real democrat President this country has had in many years. The head of it over seven streets of the capital unheralded and unattended, speaking familiarly with all his acquaintances, nodding to those who happen to recognize and salute him and grasping the hands of his old friends who greet him as they are dressed in silks or gunnysacks. He treats all alike, and his simple tastes have become so well known there has grown up in the hearts of the people of Washington the admiration for their President the like of which has not been known for years.

Goats, Game, Cows and Cattle.

There are 4,520,000 goats in Spain. It is estimated that since he came to the throne Emperor William has killed 25,372 head of game. Last year 14,094,978 head of cattle were delivered at the Chicago Stockyards. The average product for cows in Holland is eighty pounds of butter and 180 pounds of cheese per annum. Devonshire cattle were first imported into this country in 1817. A company has purchased a farm in Illinois, where cat farming will be carried on for the skins, which sell for from ten to fifteen cents each. Maltese and black cats will be reared, and the "cattish" collection is expected to number 10,000 in one year and 100,000 in two years.

Greensboro A. and M. College.

The closing exercises of the A. and M. College at Greensboro, will take place May 22-27. Following is the program: May 22d, 3 P. M.—Annual Sermon, Bishop J. W. Hood, D. D., LL. D. May 24th, 8 P. M.—Y. M. C. A. Address by P. P. Clayton, A. M. M. May 25th, 8 P. M.—Prize Contest. May 26th, 8 P. M.—Literary Entertainment—The Offering of Industries, by the Wise Literary Society. May 27th, 4 P. M.—Annual Address, by Rev. E. J. Green. Class Orations, Presentation of Prizes.