RED POTTAGE

CHAPTER I.

The Fatal Lighter.

"I CAN'T get out," said Swift's starling, looking through the bars of his cage.

"I will get out," said Hugh Scarlett to himself, seeing no bars, but half conscious of a cage. "I will get out," he repeated, as his hansom took him swiftly from the house in Portman Square, where he had been dining, toward that other house in Carlton House Terrace, whither his thoughts had travelled on before him, out-distancing the trip-clip-clop, trip-clip-clop of the horse.

"I will get out," he said again to himself with an impatient movement.

It was beginning to weary him, this commonplace intrigue which had been so new and alluring a year ago. He did not own it to himself, but he was tired of it.

Perhaps the reason why good resolutions have earned for themselves such an evil repute as pavingstones is because they are often the result, not of repentance, but of the restlessness that dogs an evaporating pleasure.

This liaison had been alternately his pride and his shame for many months. But now it was becoming something more—which it had been all the time, only he had not noticed it till lately—a fetter, a clog, something irksome, to be cast off and pushed out of sight.

Decidedly, the moment for the good resolution had arrived.

"I will break it off," he said again. "Thank Heaven, not a soul has ever guessed it."

How could any one have guessed it?

He remembered the day when he had first met her a year ago, and had looked upon her as merely a pretty woman.

He remembered other days, and the gradual building up between them of a fairy palace. He had added a stone here, she a stone there, until suddenly it became a prison.

Had he been tempter or tempted? He did not know. He did not care. He wanted only to be out of it.

His better feelings and his conscience had been awakened by the first touch of weariness.

His brief infatuation had run its course.

"I will break with her gradually," he said, like the tyro he was, and he pictured himself the wretched scenes in which she would abuse him, reproach him, probably compromise herself, the letters she would write to him. At any rate, he need not read them.

Oh! how tired he was of the whole thing beforehand. Why had he been such a fool?

A brougham passed him swiftly on noiseless wheels, and the woman in it caught a glimpse of the high-bred, clean-shaven face, half savage, half sullen, in the hansom.

"Anger, impatience and remorse," she said to herself, and finished buttoning her gloves.

"Thank Heaven, not a soul has ever guessed it," repeated Hugh, fervently, as the hansom came suddenly to a stand still.

In another moment he was taking Lady Newhaven's hand as she stood at the entrance of her amber drawing-room beside a grove of pink orchids.

He chatted a moment, greeted Lord Newhaven, and passed on into the crowded rooms.

How could any one have guessed it? No breath of scandal had ever touched Lady Newhaven.

She stood beside her pink orchids, near her fatigued-looking, gentle-mannered husband, a very pretty woman in white satin and diamonds.

Perhaps her blond hair was a shade darker at the roots than in its waved coils; perhaps her blue eyes did not look quite in harmony with their blue-black lashes; but the whole effect had the delicate, conventional perfection of a cleverly touched-up chromo-lithograph. Of course tastes differ.

The diamond sun upon Lady Newhaven's breast quivered a little, a very little, as Hugh greeted her, and she turned to offer the same small smile and gloved hand to the next comer, whose name was leaping before him from one footman to another.

Hugh had gone through the first room, and after a quarter of an hour found himself in the doorway of the second.

He had arrived late, and the rooms were already thinning.

A woman in a pale-green gown was standing near the open window, her white profile outlined against the framed darkness, as she listened with evident amusement to the tall, ill-dressed man beside her.

Hugh's eyes lost the veiled scorn with which it was their wont to look at society and the indulgent patronage which lurked in them for pretty women.

Rachel West slowly turned her face toward him without seeing him, and his heart leaped.

She was not beautiful except with the dignity of health and a certain dignity of carriage which is the outcome of a head and hands and body that are at unity with each other and with a mind absolutely unconscious of self.

She had not the long nose which so frequently usurps more than its share of the faces of the well-bred, nor had she, alas! the short upper lip which redeems everything.

Her features were as insignificant as her coloring. People rarely noticed that Rachel's hair was brown and that her deep-set eyes were gray. But upon her grave face the word "Helper" was plainly written—and something else. What was it?

Just as in the faces of seamen we trace the onslaught of storm and sun and brine, and the puckering of the skin round the eyes that comes of long watching in half-lights, so in some faces, calm and pure as Rachel's, on which the sun and rain have never beaten, there is an expression betokening strong resistance from within of the brunt of a whirlwind from without.

The marks of conflict and endurance on a young face—who shall see them unmoved! The Mother of Jesus must have noticed a great difference in her Son when she first saw Him again after the temptation in the wilderness.

Rachel's grave, amused glance fell upon Hugh.

Their eyes met, and he instantly perceived, to his astonishment, that she recognized him.

But she did not bow, and a moment later left the nearly empty rooms with the man who was talking to her.

Hugh was excited out of recognition of his former half-scornful, half-base self.

That woman must be his wife.

She would save him from himself, this cynical, restless self, which never remained in one stay.

The half-acknowledged weakness in her nature unconsciously flung itself upon his strength, a strength which had been tried.

She would love him, and uphold him. There would be no more yielding to circumstances if that pure, strong soul were close beside him.

He would lean upon her, and the ugly by-paths of these last years would know him no more. Her presence would leaven his whole life.

In the momentary insanity, which was perhaps, after all, only a prophetic intuition, he had no fears, no misgivings. He thought that with that face it was not possible that she could be so wicked as to refuse him.

"She will marry me," he said to himself. "She must."

Lady Newhaven touched him gently on the arm.

"I dared not speak to you before," she said. "Nearly every one has gone. Will you take me down to supper? I am tired out."

He stared at her, not recognizing her.

"Have I vexed you?" she faltered.

He took her into the supper room and got her a glass of champagne.

She subsided onto a soft beside another woman, vaguely suspecting trouble in the air. He felt thankful that Rachel had already gone.

Hugh had got one arm in his coat.

An instinct of flight possessed him, a vague horror of the woman in diamonds furtively watching him under her lowered eyelids through the open door.

"Oh, Scarlett!" said Lord Newhaven, detaining him languidly, "I want three minutes of your valuable time. Come into my study."

THE TWO MEN MEASURED THE TWO LIGHTERS TOGETHER UNDER THE ELECTRIC LIGHT.

Over the mantel-shelf were hung a few old Japanese inlaid cartridges, and beneath them an array of pistols.

"Useless now," said Lord Newhaven, touching them affectionately. "But," he added, with a shade more listlessness than before, "Society has become accustomed to do without them, and does ill without them, but we must conform to her."

Hugh started slightly, and then remained motionless.

"You observe these two paper lighters, Scarlett? One is an inch shorter than the other. They have been waiting on the mantel-shelf for the last month, till I had an opportunity of drawing your attention to them. I am sure we perfectly understand each other. No name need be mentioned. All scandal is avoided. I feel confident you will not hesitate to make me the only reparation one man can make another in the somewhat hackneyed circumstances in which we find ourselves."

Lord Newhaven took the lighters out of the glass.

He glanced suddenly at Hugh's stunned face and went on:

"I am sorry the idea is not my own. I read of it in a magazine. Though comparatively modern, it promises soon to become as customary as the much-to-be-regretted pistols for two and coffee for four. I hold the lighters thus, and you draw. Whoever draws or keeps the short one is pledged to leave this world within four months, or shall we say five, on account of the pheasant shooting? Five be it. Is it agreed? Just so! Will you draw?"

A swift spasm passed over Hugh's face, and a tiger glint leaped into Lord Newhaven's eyes, fixed intently upon him.

There was a brief second in which Hugh's mind wavered, as the flame of a candle wavers in a sudden draught.

Lord Newhaven's eyes glittered.

He advanced the lighters an inch nearer.

If he had not advanced them that inch Hugh thought afterward that he would have refused to draw.

He backed against the mantelpiece and then put out his hand suddenly and drew.

It seemed the only way of escape.

The two men measured the lighters on the same under the electric light.

Lord Newhaven laughed.

Hugh stood a moment and then went out.

(To be continued.)

NORDICA SCORES IN CONCERT.

Van Rooy Shares with Her in Public Appreciation.

A NEW COMER IN OPERA.

Bertrand's Success in "The Flying Dutchman"—Leonora Jackson at Philharmonic.

Nordica, in a flaming scarlet frock, with a tiara of diamonds in her hair and long ropes of pearls about her neck, made a stunning figure at the opera concert at the Metropolitan last night. She was in excellent voice, and her gracious mood fairly captivated the large audience. Her principal number was the "Dich Theure Halle," from "Tannhauser," sung in her most authoritative manner. To this she added several simple English and French airs, sung with expression as varied as the themes.

Scarcely less important a figure than Nordica was that sterling artist Van Rooy, whose sonorous, flexible, expressive voice and delightful method in a selection of German songs that included Beethoven's "An die Hoffnung" and Schubert's "Der Wanderer," distinctly raised the artistic level of the concert.

Mantelli contributed an aria from Gounod's "Sapho" and "The Noble Seigneur," from "The Huguenots." She was never in better voice and her dramatic fervor was admirable.

It was unfortunate that Scotti, one of the season's new baritones, who has a good voice, elected to be heard first in a mournful aria of Wolfram's, from "Tannhauser." Later, however, his spirited rendering of the prologue from "Pagliacci" fairly aroused the house.

Paur gave the orchestra plenty to do from Weber's "Euryanthe" overture at the beginning, through examples of Humperdinck, Rubinstein, Haydn and Goldmark, to Strauss's "Beautiful Blue Danube" waltz at the end, and it was well done.

The concert was one of the best of the season, but it lasted nearly three hours, and the half-empty house for the final number showed that it was too long. Take the hint, Mr. Paur! Either refuse encores, or cut down your programmes.

BERTRAM AND GADSKI IN "THE FLYING DUTCHMAN."

The presentation of "The Flying Dutchman" at the Opera-House on Saturday afternoon was notable for the debut in America of Bertram, the German baritone, who was the hero, and the first appearance in this city with Mr. Grau's company of Gadski, who was the heroine. Both were eminently successful. Bertram disclosed a fine stage presence, a voice of great natural purity and flexibility and an artistic method that was captivating. He sang in tune and made the rather dreary monologue of the first act almost interesting.

Gadski's excellent work with the Damrosch organization has made her well known, and already a favorite. Her Senta was admirable in voice and bearing. She has grown steadily in artistic stature since she was heard first in this city, and it is inevitable that all of Wagner's great feminine creations shall fall to her in time.

The cast was a good one. Schumann-Heink lent distinction to the small part of Mary; Dippel was a tuneful Erik; Pringle, who took the place of Eduard de Reske, indisposed, an impressive Daland, and Reuter a capable Steersman. Paur conducted with spendid spirit. The only weakness was in the chorus. If Mr. Grau might secure for it some young, fresh voices, the possessors of which could act with intelligence, he would fill a long felt want.

DE LUSSAN AS MIGNON SCORES IN THOMAS'S OPERA.

"Mignon" was the offering at the Opera-House on Saturday night, with a cast that insured an excellent performance. Very pleasing to look at was Mlle. Zelie De Lussan as the waif whose fortunes constitute the theme of Ambroise Thomas's delightful composition. The ranks of Mr. Grau's operatic principals could not have furnished a Mignon more pleasing in appearance or whose voice seemed better suited to the expression of the joys and sorrows of that fortunate unfortunate. Mlle. De Lussan sang with characteristic feeling. She won the sympathy of the audience at once and carried it throughout. The rebellion against the tyrannous Giarno; the love born of gratitude to her student champion, Wilhelm Meister; the tender affection for the aged Lothario; the impulsive jealousy toward Philene, enchantress of her beloved Wilhelm, all were sung and acted with captivating art. The last act in which love rewards Mignon for her suffering was delicately dramatic and called out enthusiastic applause.

Sailgnac as Wilhelm Meister and Plancon as Lothario shared in the honors of this final triumph. Sailgnac, in his early scenes, was not very effective, but later he showed his quality in a manner that won unqualified approval. Plancon was at his best, and Plancon's best in such a character as Lothario is about as good as can be done. Mme. Suzanne Adams was an excellent Philene, and Dufriche in the minor part of Giarno revealed the genuine artist. Mlle. Olitzka as Frederic had scarcely an opportunity to display her excellent voice. M. Queyla as Laerte left nothing to be desired.

The orchestra under the direction of Sig. Bevignani was repeatedly applauded.

LEONORA JACKSON AT THE PHILHARMONIC CONCERT.

Miss Leonora Jackson, an American violinist just returned from a course of study abroad, was the soloist at the Philharmonic Society's third concert at Carnegie Hall on Saturday evening. She is a slender, graceful young woman, with an expressive face, indicating strong individuality. Her confidence and self-possession are marked. She chose for her debut Brahms's difficult concerto in D major and acquitted herself creditably. Her bowing is excellent, the swing of her arm being muscular in its strength and flexibility. She has learned much of the mechanics of her art and the hard passages bothered her not a bit. Her tone is fairly large and of some singing quality. What she lacks is feeling and sympathetic expression.

Humperdinck's "Moorish Rhapsody," which has been heard here only once before, was the principal work of the orchestra. It is full of color and sensuous beauty and is very dainty. Both it and Schumann's delightful Symphony No. 4 in D minor were admirably played, Mr. Paur, who worked with his accustomed earnestness and energy, has reason to be proud of his acchievements with this organization.

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MRS. FISH OPENS SOCIAL SEASON.

MRS STUYVESANT FISH.

Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish will give a dinner of twenty covers this evening at her home, 25 East Seventy-eighth street. This will be the first of her January series of entertainments. Mrs. Fish and her guests will afterward attend the Drexel ball.

Small Show for Hawaiian Delegates

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8.—Gilbert M. Little, of Hawaii, who is here representing the anti-Dole faction, called on Senator Hanna yesterday and asked that the next National Republican Convention admit delegates from the Islands. The Senator told him that while not authorized to speak officially, he did not believe such delegates would be admitted, unless by that time Congress had determined the official status of the Islands.

Bears Adrift on a Berg.

BALTIMORE, Jan. 8.—Capt. Eckhoff, of the steamship La Hesloaye, in port from Rotterdam, says that when his ship was off the Newfoundland Banks a few days ago a large iceberg was sighted. Four large polar bears were seen walking about on a flat portion of its surface.

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DANIEL T. HOAG, President.

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GOSSIP OF THE THEATRE.

A Busy Week for the Playhouses—Beatrice Cameron Back Again.

The second week of the new year begins busily with three new plays, "Naughty Anthony" at the Herald Square, "Little Red Riding Hood" at the Casino and "The Gunner's Mate" at the Grand Opera-House. There was to have been another, "Broadway to Tokio," at the New York, but Manager Sire postponed it for a week. Maude Adams's reappearance in "The Little Minister" at the Criterion has been put off until to-morrow night.

Miss Cameron Returns to the Stage.

An event of no little importance is the return to the stage to-night of Beatrice Cameron, who will appear as Raina in Mr. Mansfield's revival of "Arms and the Man" at the Garden. It is just a year since Mrs. Mansfield left the stage and has devoted the time to the study of domesticity with a little Miss Mansfield as the leading subject. Miss Cameron (she retains her stage name) created the part of Raina seven years ago.

Miss Boona Heard From.

Little Miss Boona gave additional interest to the performance of "Whirl-i-Gig" at Weber & Fields's Music Hall Saturday afternoon. Miss Boona, be it known, is the adopted daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ross, and is a trifle more than three years old. Boona sat in a box with her grandmother and listened attentively. In the scene between Mr. Ross and Miss Perry the latter asks "Have you ever loved any other girl but me?" Before Mr. Ross could reply Boona leaned over the box rail and gave a shrill cry to attract Miss Perry's attention, then patted herself on the chest, shaking her head vigorously in the affirmative. The entire audience applauded the mite, and Mr. Ross, who had turned scarlet, stammered and explained "That's my baby."

Why Hackett Objected.

In a letter received by Manager W. M. Lawrence recently James K. Hackett explained that he had made a vigorous protest in a Cincinnati hotel over what was usually deemed an honor. The manager of the principal hotel usually names some choice dish after any actor of prominence who happens to stop at the caravansary. One item on the menu read, "Creme of celery, a la James K. Hackett." The actor's protest was based on an objection to being considered as "in the soup."

Miss Bowen's Recital.

Miss Artemesia Bowen will give a recital on Tuesday evening, Jan. 9, at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, parlor D.R. The programme will consist of selections from Shakespeare and the classics. This is the first of a series of recitals to be given by Miss Bowen this season.

Schweighofer's Change of Bill.

The demand for "S Nullerl," the play in which Felix Schweighofer scored his most conspicuous success, has induced Manager Conried to change the announced programme for this week, the last but one of the engagement. Instead of "Gypsflgur" (The Statuette) "S Nullerl" will be repeated to-night, to-morrow and Wednesday. Thursday evening and Saturday matinee three one-act plays will be given—"Unter vier Augen" (Under Four Eyes), Vienna Character Pictures, by Felix Schweighofer, and "Eine Vereinsschwester" (A Female Lodge Member). Friday and Saturday night "Ein Blitzmadel" (A Telegraph Girl), Costa's extremely jolly farce, will be repeated.

THE STROLLER.