

insufficiency in the address the two messages were delivered together. Pinney took the big ruby back to his room and locked it up in his safe with satisfaction and a sense of profound relief such as he had rarely felt in a long and honorable life; and he would have been horrified and distressed beyond words if he could have even guessed that he had been the means of sending an innocent and helpless girl to Holloway jail.

ONE thing more which concerns this tale happened on that same day. Two well dressed young men drove up to the door of a quiet and very respectable hotel in the West End, and packed their belongings; and when they had paid what they owed they told the porter to call two hansoms, each had his things put on one of them, and they nodded to each other and parted. One hansom drove to Euston and the other to Charing Cross. Whether they ever met again, I do not know, and it does not matter; but in order to clear Baraka's character once and to avoid a useless and perfectly transparent mystery, it is as well to say directly that it was the young man that drove to Euston, on his way to Liverpool and New York, that had Logotheti's ruby sewed up in his waistcoat pocket; and that the ruby really belonged to Margaret, since Logotheti had already given it to her, before he had brought it to Pinney to be cut and set.

MARGARET received her friend's letter and the account of Baraka's committal to prison by the same post on the morning after she and Van Torp had been to hear "Parsifal" together, and opened the two envelopes before reading her other letters.

Margaret read the newspaper cutting first. Baraka's case was reported with the rather brutal simplicity that characterizes such accounts in the English papers, and Logotheti's name appeared in Pinney's evidence. There were barely twenty-five lines of small print.

But the prima donna bit her handsome lip and her eyes sparkled with anger, as she put the cutting back into the first envelope, and took the folded letter out of the other. The girl had not only stolen a ruby, but it was Margaret's ruby, the one Logotheti had given her for her engagement, which she had wasted upon having set as a ring. Further, it had been stolen by the very man from whom Logotheti had pretended that he had bought it, a feat that cast the high light of absurdity on his unlikely story. It was natural enough that she should have seen it, and should have known that he was taking it to Pinney's, and that she should have been able to prepare a little screw of paper with a bit of glass inside, to substitute for it. The improbabilities of such an explanation did not occur to Lady Maud, who saw only the glaring fact that the handsome Tartar girl had accompanied Logotheti, disguised as a man, and had ultimately robbed him, as he richly deserved. She had imposed upon Van Torp too, and had probably tried to sell him the very stone she had stolen from Logotheti; and the one she had made him take as a gift was nothing but a bit of glass, as he said it might be, for all he knew.

Margaret was really a sensible English girl, although she was so very angry. "This is ridiculous!" she said aloud, with emphasis, when she caught sight of herself in the mirror and saw that she was quite white and her eyes were bloodshot. "I won't be so silly!" And she sat down to try and think quietly.

It was not so easy. A Tartar girl indeed! More probably a handsome Greek. How could they know the difference in a London police court? But it did not matter. Of course she would have been angry if Logotheti had made love to the handsome woman in England; but not so furious as she was now. An ignorant Eastern girl! A creature that followed him about in men's clothes! A thief! Pah! Disgusting!

Each detail that occurred to her made it more unbearable. She remembered her conversation with him through the telephone when she was at Versailles; his explanation the next day, which she had so foolishly accepted; his kiss! That evening he had refused to stay to dinner; no doubt he had gone back to his house in Paris, and had dined with the girl—in the hall of the Aphrodite! It was no wonder that they had succeeded in deceiving her for awhile, the two Orientals together! They had actually made Rufus Van Torp believe their story, which must have been a very different matter from lying to a credulous young woman who had let herself fall in love! But for

her friend Lady Maud, she would still be their victim.

Her heart went out to the woman that had saved her from her fate, and with the thought came the impulse to send a grateful message; and the first fury of her anger subsided with the impulse to do so. By and by it would cool and harden to a lasting resentment which would not soften again.

Her hand still shook so that she could hardly hold the pen steady while she wrote the telegram:

Unspeakingly grateful. If you can join me here, will gladly wait for you. Must see you at once. Do come!

She felt better as she rose from the table, and when she looked at herself in the mirror she saw that her face had changed again and that her natural color was returning. After summoning Potts, she seated herself before the dressing table, while the maid proceeded to fasten a broad brimmed straw hat on the thick brown hair, then spreading an immense white veil over it.

WHEN Margaret was putting on her gloves, Mrs. Rushmore herself came in, and after the prima donna had thrust Lady Maud's letter and chipping into her glove, the two went out together and walked slowly down the street. They had barely got started, when Mrs. Rushmore's head was up, her parasol lay back on her shoulder, her faded eyes were brighter than before, and the beginning of a social smile wreathed her hitherto grave lips. There were lions about, and she was pointing.

"There's Mr. Van Torp, my dear," she said, "and unless I'm much mistaken—yes, I knew it! He's with Count Kralinsky. I saw the Count from the window yesterday when he arrived. I hope our friend will present him."

"I dare say," Margaret answered indifferently, but surveying the two men through the white mist of her thick veil. "Yes!" said Mrs. Rushmore with delight, and almost whispering in her excitement. "He has seen us, and now he's telling the Count who we are!"

Margaret was used to her excellent old friend's ways on such occasions, and gave no more heed to them than she would have given to a kitten scampering after a ball of string. The kitten would certainly catch the ball in the end, and Mrs. Rushmore would as surely capture the lion.

Van Torp raised his hat when he was within four or five paces of the women, and his companion, who was a head and shoulders taller than he, slackened his pace and stopped a little way behind him as Mrs. Rushmore shook hands and Margaret nodded pleasantly.

"May I present Count Kralinsky?" asked the American. "I've met him before, and we have just renewed our acquaintance." Van Torp looked from Mrs. Rushmore to Margaret, and tried to see her expression through her veil. She answered his look by a slight inclination of the head.

"We shall be delighted," said the elder woman.

The Count had a magnificent golden beard, a bronzed complexion, and rather uncertain blue eyes, in one of which he wore a single eyeglass without a string. He was quietly dressed, and wore no jewelry, excepting one ring, in which blazed a large tallow topped ruby. He had the unmistakable air of a man of the world, and was perfectly at ease. When he raised his straw hat he disclosed a very white forehead, and short, thick, fair hair. There was no sign of approaching middle age in his face or figure; but Margaret felt, or guessed, that he was older than he looked.

In her stiffly correct French, Mrs. Rushmore said that she was enchanted to make his acquaintance, and Margaret murmured sweetly but intelligibly.

"The Count speaks English perfectly," observed Van Torp.

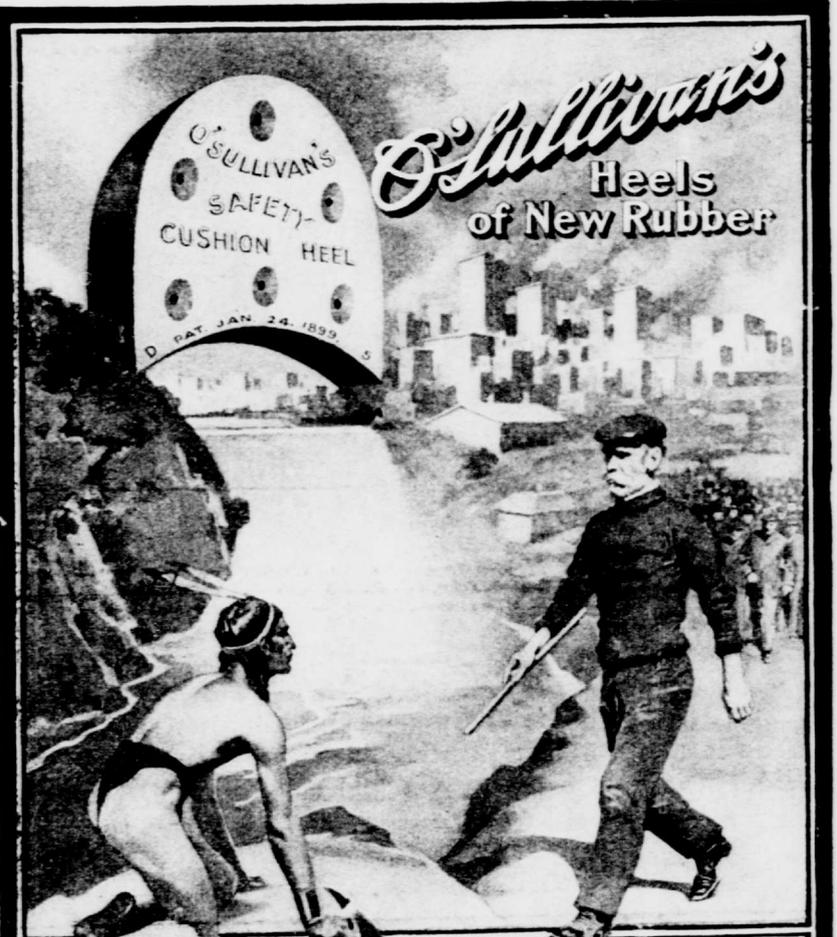
He ranged himself beside Margaret, leaving the foreigner to Mrs. Rushmore, much to her gratification.

"We were going to walk," she said. "Will you join us?" And she moved on.

"It is a great pleasure to meet you," Kralinsky said by way of opening the conversation. "I have often heard of you from friends in Paris. Your little dinners at Versailles are famous all over Europe. I am sure we have many mutual friends, though you may never have heard my name."

Mrs. Rushmore was visibly pleased, and as the way was not very wide Margaret and Van Torp dropped behind, and were soon deeply engaged in earnest conversation.

To be continued next Sunday



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