

THE SHADOW OF THE CORDILLERA

Or, The Magnolia Flower.

BY VIRGINIA LEILA WENTZ.

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Anna Abbott, debutante of the previous year, had teased Mrs. Morris into allowing her protegee to spend the summer with her at the Abbotts' country place in Twyeffort-by-the-Sea. "It promises to be a jolly season, and, you know, it will give Lianna a nice little foretaste," she had argued sagely. So, accompanied by Anna's maid, they set off for Twyeffort, whence the family had gone some weeks in advance.

They had something like two hours to travel and a compartment quite to themselves. The maid put her feet up comfortably and dozed at intervals. Anna was in high spirits. At last she had dear Lianna quite to herself. Lianna took her so thoroughly in earnest, which her other friends did not; she sympathized so fully and, above all, so quietly, making just the fun of her that was essential to prevent her brooding. Then she had the most original ideas about everything from the arrangement of a ribbon upward. Yes, decidedly, she was a dear!

"The Maitlands had been in Twyeffort for the last fortnight," Anna began tentatively. She held out a box of chocolate mint.

"I have been thinking it," said Lianna in her prettily deliberate English.

"Why, you witch? And how?" Lianna shrugged her shoulders slightly and reached for another chocolate mint.

"Why and how?" "Well, then, you have been so—walking in the air!" She glanced at her companion merrily from beneath her long lashes.

"Tease! Anyhow you're going to find Margaret quite your style of girl. You will like Charles, too—for my sake at least?"

"Of course," replied Lianna demurely as a nun. The Maitlands had been spending their summers at Twyeffort for several years and were neighbors to the Abbotts. By her own account Anna was deeply in love with Charles, the only son.

"Oh, look here," exclaimed Anna, sitting bolt upright with an energy that split the chocolates and nearly woke the maid. "The greatest fun in the world would be to have you lose your heart to that wonderful personage they have up there!"

"No doubt," Lianna leaned back against the cushioned seat and laughed softly for a whole minute. "But what wonderful personage, goose?"

"Oh, a painter or something. He's up with Charles for a month or so. They were chums in Paris, I believe. But, on the whole, I guess you won't like him. This is what Margaret says in a letter I got yesterday." Anna hunted in her pocket and pulled out an envelope. "I kept it on purpose to read to you," she explained. Then she found the place she wanted.

"M. Peyrac is a man of surprising beauty, and he has the face of an angel, but he's impossible. He remembers my existence every now and then and comes up to me with his gleaming eyes. He has eyes that make you think a declaration at the very least is coming. Instead of that this is what one gets: 'Have you bathed this morning, mademoiselle? I did not see you in the water.' Not very consoling when you happened to be in the water under his nose all the time. 'The first thing you venture to say that is not monosyllabic off goes his attention goodness knows where. You can see his eyes roving in every direction but yours.'"

The girls looked out of the car window and laughed. They were merry that morning.

Twyeffort was a pretty place, uniting the advantages of seaside and country. The Abbotts' home was built facing the sea, with its garden sloping in three wide terraces toward the beach. Back of the house and behind the winding white road that led to the little station there were green and shady walks. Charles and Margaret Maitland had driven to meet Anna and her friend.

Secretly Lianna was disappointed in the nine days' wonder she had heard so much about. But she liked Margaret the moment she saw her. She decided there was a soul behind her dark, purple eyes and perhaps a trifle of sadness mingled with the sweetness of the unworlly mouth, as of one who yearned overmuch.

Lianna went about for the first few days admiringly. The bowlder down on the beach was such a mighty one! That shadowy nook, further down, formed by the rocky overhang, was such a fine place to read in of a warm day! That spot in the woods where the overbranching was so heavy, leaving no more sky at your head than at your feet, was just like a tiny chapel! But the discovery that brought her most joy, touched, it may be, with a shade of pain, was a fine old magnolia tree.

The second evening after their arrival Charles fetched his artist friend over to call. He was, indeed, as Margaret had described him, a man with a face of surprising beauty, a clean cut, even profile, a clear, open air complexion, frank, innocent eyes and waving hair of the palest Saxon yellow.

Charles had met him in the Bohemia of Paris, being fond of the same effects in literature which his Gallic friend secured with an indolent and facile brush. As a matter of fact, Peyrac



Peyrac sat down to talk by Lianna's side. Knew Paris from the towers of Notre-Dame to the debouchment of the sewers.

"What do you suppose we have been doing today?" asked Charles as they all sat on the old fashioned porch in the moonlight.

"Playing tennis? Smoking cigarettes? Getting into a tangle of talk?" suggested Anna accommodatingly.

"Not at all," replied Charles scornfully. "We have been improvising a studio in a building outside the house, where our friend here can work continually—except when he's doing one of those few things you just mentioned."

"I brought my canvases and colors with me," M. Peyrac explained. His voice was electric and deep, with a touch of Gallic accent so slight as to require a fastidious ear to notice that it was an accent at all.

Presently Anna discovered that she wanted to show Charles how high the vine had grown that he helped her plant last season. The vine was on the other end of the wide porch, of course. Peyrac, getting up from the steps where he had been sitting, pulled a low chair forward and sat down to talk by Lianna's side. He said nothing much, but he put vivacity into everything he uttered. Unconsciously the girl contrasted him with De Witte Morris.

"The little vine over there seems to be large in its powers of attraction," Peyrac commented at last. And then he hummed:

Quand les canards vent deux a deux, C'est qu'ils ont a parler entre eux.

"But that is not always true, monsieur," laughed Lianna, tickled at the absurdity of the words. "We, for instance, can have nothing particular to say."

CHAPTER V.

M. Peyrac had just finished dressing the next morning when the sound of a girl's voice drew him to the window, which was open.

Out in the garden, near to the box hedge which divided the Maitlands' grounds from the Abbotts', stood Lianna. She was stooping forward, playing with Silver, Anna's beautiful greyhound. In one hand she held a sort of scarlet wrap, a fragile, silken, feather-weight thing, which had proved too warm for her shoulders. The other hand was stretched out seductively to the dog leaping after her. The scarlet showed vividly against her white morning gown, a little crystal buckle flashed at her waist, and the sunshine caught the waving hair, the pink cheek, the white moving hand, the lace ruffles at her throat and wrist.

For a moment only Peyrac stood still and watched.

The girl was yet playing with the hound, when she turned suddenly with a smile on her lips, and there in the full glare of the intoxicating June sunlight she met the man's eyes for the first time. A blind feeling of helplessness and indefinite longing ending somewhere round her heart in a thud of indescribable pleasure passed through her frame.

She pulled herself together angrily, and the smile vanished. "Go down, Silver," she said severely to the dog, whose paw was making for her shoulder. Clearly this was shyness pushed to the verge of absurdity. She must conquer the ridiculous feeling, must speak.

"Good morning, monsieur. It is going to be a warm day, do you think?" She nearly forced the words through her lips, which had remained parted all the time.

Peyrac did not hear the words. He was studying the girl intently.

"Pardon me," he said, putting his head on one side and drawing his eyelids together as he concentrated his gaze upon her. "People forgive painters for personalities, and you don't know how much I should like to get you on canvas, just as you are, the dog and all."

The blood invaded Lianna's cheeks, slowly at first; then, as she realized his meaning, in a hot blaze of crimson.

"I do not aspire, monsieur, to be an artist's model." She walked toward the house with as much dignity as her 19 years were capable of.

But this was only the beginning. That evening, as she was singing for Mrs. Abbott in the drawing room, she became aware that Peyrac was standing with the group of people on the porch and was looking in through the French window. She threw back her lovely head and sang with exultation. "Even then," she told herself afterward, "I must have been loving him without knowing." She sang the old Spanish ballad of the knight errant, and when she came to the last lines—

Some day more kind I fate may find, Some night kiss thee—

she marveled at the beauty of her own voice; her face flushed, her eyes sparkled. She knew that she was doing her best.

But evidently the artist had taken no notice of that lovely young voice; it was only her face that attracted him. As they were getting ready for bed that night Anna said:

"What have you done to our invulnerable painter? He remarked, when he heard you singing awhile ago, that he just tingled for his brushes. He wondered if it would be possible for you to sing that same song in the same way, unaccompanied, in his studio."

This seemed a little too much. He not only wished to use her as a model, but he even wished to have her moods and expressions subject to his orders! Lianna was perfectly poised, her slender limbs dangling floorward, one arm akimbo, the other behind her back. Anna was reclining on an ottoman, smoothing out her ribbon sash.

"Well," she said, as Lianna made no reply, but kept on dangling her limbs. "do you think you can oblige him?"

Lianna's only comment was to tap upon the heel of her right slipper with the toe of her left.

"He says," pursued Anna mischievously, "that you have a great deal of scenic effect about you, whatever that means. I confess I'm not sure of the term."

"Neither am I." Lianna's right slipper landed many yards off across the floor.

The next day she caught the obnoxious, rude man stepping backward several times to get her in perspective. Once he actually ventured to make a tube of his hand. When he put it to his eye and turned his head sideways, screwing up one side of his face, Lianna couldn't help noticing in spite of her vexation that the corner of the lip which was thus drawn up exposed some magnificent white teeth. However, she said:

"You are extremely impolite," and then, with a sudden fear that he might compliment her on the effect of anger on her face, she turned and left him.

It was with direct reference to the advancement of his art that Peyrac set to work to interest and make friends with Lianna. He found his way beset with difficulties, and at the end of a fortnight he had to acknowledge that he had made no progress at all. He had come to Twyeffort meaning to do some landscapes and sea views. But, fudge, how flat they seemed now! He was a portrait painter if anything, and at last the gods had led him to a being who appealed to the power within him as no one yet ever had done. He must paint this girl; by Jove, he must!

But, even supposing she consented, there was a difficulty. The wonder of her face was its expression—the way the spirit gleamed through her features. Her expression was so maddeningly changeable and evanescent. At times it was marvelously like shot silk. To get the effect he wanted she must be strongly moved—moved, for instance, as she had been by the sight of the sunset on the sea the other evening. Plainly one could not get sunsets and seas into the studio. But—

Sapristi! He would do it. Why not? He knew himself to possess a charm for women, a charm that was all the more potent because he had seldom cared to use it. Then it was that he changed his tactics. He ceased fuming and fretting at being thwarted in his will; instead he looked at Lianna with a compelling tenderness in his eyes, and he spoke to her in tones that were a more subtle music to her ear than any she had ever heard. It was beneath Peyrac to weigh life in the balance; he scorned the idea that right and wrong should enter into a man's calculations.

As to the girl, she was unsophisticated in her comprehension of the emotions as the man was familiar and experienced. She only knew that she sang these days as she never before had sung and that she felt the need to sing continually. She called it practicing when she spoke of it, but it seemed to her as if it were really taking breath. However, Peyrac was as powerless as ever to effect the one wish of his heart; she would not sit to him. One day he studiously let fall some words about his intended departure the following week. He spoke to Lianna alone, and his face looked stolid.

The girl's heart bounded, then stood still. It was some seconds before she felt it beat again. A reckless determination took possession of her.

"Why are you going?" she said. Her voice was cold, almost hard.

"Because I've nothing to paint here," he answered curtly, "nothing that suits me, at least."

"Would you stay if you could paint me?"

"Yes."

"Then stay," she said in the same dull tone.

He seized her hands like a man beside himself with joy. Bending over them to drop a kiss, he whispered the one word, "Darling!"

But to himself he said, "Fame and fortune at the next Salon!"

That night, after Anna had gone to sleep, Lianna slipped out of bed and, leaning her elbows on the sill of the open window, she sat for a long while letting the cool air fan her brow. Her ears were full of Peyrac's infectious tones, her pulses still throbbled with his mesmeric touch. She reached over to the dressing table and, taking up a crimson rose which she had placed there in a tiny vase, she kissed it passionately. Peyrac had given it to her, and in this wise: His artistic eye had not liked the magnolia flower which she had carried about with her that evening; the milky whiteness had brought out unpleasant tints in her smooth skin. "The crimson suits your Castilian beauty better, senorita," he had said as he handed her the rose. "Poor, dear Innocencio!" sighed Lianna

demurely, recalling this little instance. "He never found fault with me and the magnolia." But the sense of capture was upon her, and even while she felt indignant and resentful for having been forced to yield about the picture there was a strange sense of sweetness in submission.

By and by in the alternate light and shadow of the trees down below a small, red spark appeared, moving regularly to and fro, but the foliage was too thick for her to see it. It was Peyrac's cigar. He had just come out from his studio, where he had been choosing a canvas, placing it on an easel and arranging a model stand preparatory to the first sitting the next morning.

The appointment was for 9 o'clock. The early light was the best. "I'll give her a half hour's grace," he had said, but punctually to the minute the handle of the door turned, and Lianna was on the threshold. He turned quickly to greet her.

She stood framed in the dark curtained doorway, her long dress caught up round her in one hand, the other resting slightly on the portiere. It was an attitude of grace and beauty, and she looked upward at him with eyes that were bewildering in their manifold lights. She looked at him appealingly as a child, innocently as a girl, proudly as a woman.

"Dearest," he exclaimed, "could you take that pose? Would it be too hard for you?"

The gentle beauty of that first word pervaded the rest with a light of its own.

"Try me and see," she said, with a soft exultation in her voice.

And when at last the picture was finished it was wonderful indeed. Even those ignorant of the art of painting could see that. Peyrac had decided that his subject should be dressed in queenly apparel. There were jewels on the slender shoe, from which the wind about the door was supposed to blow the garments back a little, and jewels on her fingers and at her throat.

She was wrapped in a rich cloak or rather coat of strange cut, of that dusky, rose sheen of which Tintoretto alone seems to have mastered the yellowing tones, but which the brush here had caught and riveted. However, it was the face that was the wonder. The child, the girl, the woman—the painter had put them all into the lovely eyes that looked out at one from the canvas.

When Peyrac had been working on the face, his movements had been like the dartings of a bird. He dabbed and mixed his colors, scarcely glancing at them. The sitter could even hear the hurry in his breaths. In the quick glances from the canvas to her face and back again there was no sign of aught except a workman's concentration on his task. He was flushed, or



She stood framed in the dark curtained doorway.

course, and his eyes scintillated, for he was realizing a long cherished dream in this glut of form and color ecstasy. But Lianna did not know—how could she?—what his emotion meant. The thing which it all implied to her was warning and swelling her heart day by day with a sweet, subtle joy.

And so things might have gone on indefinitely but for a letter which Peyrac received one day from Paris. In reading it he came upon an item of news which agitated him greatly. The words of themselves, however, were nothing startling—simply these:

"You recall, of course, that pretty, blue-eyed De Guerin girl that you used to see a great deal of? Well, she has come into possession of a fortune. She was the only living relative of an uncle or some one who died suddenly without a will. The law did the rest. I met her driving today in the Bois de Boulogne. You would scarcely have recognized your once shy, simple little country maiden."

The next day Peyrac was much concerned about getting a packing case for canvas.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Why She Was Right.

Haydn had a peculiar way of determining the time in which a piece of music should be sung. On one occasion a female singer in high esteem at court had been appointed to sing one of Haydn's compositions. At the rehearsal she and the conductor differed as to the time of the music. The matter was to be settled by referring it to Haydn himself. When called on to decide, he asked the conductor if the singer was handsome.

"Very," was the reply, "and a special favorite with the prince."

"Then she is right," replied Haydn.

Now bleed.

To stop bleeding at the nose, cut some blotting paper about an inch square, roll it about the size of a lead pencil and put it up the nostril that is bleeding. The hollow in it will allow the sufferer to breathe. The blood will fill the space between the tube and the nose and will very soon coagulate and cease to flow.

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