

"Why do you talk so, dearest? What is it—do you hate me?"

"Dearest." That is a sweet word—but so easily spoken. Yet a woman likes it. Oh, we women are so silly. When do you start, Henry? This morning? This afternoon?

"Start where, sweetheart?"

"Back, to get the ransom, if you can; to do as you like; to war, to love; to regain a kingdom, to say 'sweetheart' to other ears. You say it very nicely, Henry. I used to love it. I do not think Del Oro can say it so, but he says it in a new way. One tires of the old—doesn't one, Henry?"

THE queen's voice was mechanical, hurried, and in the middle of each tinted cheek glowed a spot of red not from the rouge. Her fingers nervously plucked and turned the fan in her lap.

"Explain to me about my going, please," said the king, still gently.

"I? Oh, you are going. The matter was easily settled. You want to go, don't you, Henry? Captain Del Oro has consented. He will give you a little time for collecting the ransom. Maybe it is a larger sum than you think best. You need not send it, Henry. I shall be quite happy here. The captain loves me—oh, he has said so many nice things, and I believe them. I am to be his queen, Henry. Yes, a queen; and queens must be very happy, with a king for a husband. No, I do not mean king—"

"This Del Oro? This thug—this robber—this murderer, making love to you? And you listened? Why—Doris!"

"But he is a man—and men make love where they please, don't they, Henry? You do not care. Why should you care? Do you not want me to be loved? A woman is made to be loved, Henry—and I am a woman. You are so selfish!"

"But Del Oro! You, Doris? And you would have me go, and leave you? It is monstrous! You cannot mean it! You may not forgive me, but you shall not do this. You are my wife; why, dearest, you are my wife."

"Oh, yes, I shall. What is wife to you, Henry? When I am gone then maybe you will love me. You can. I do not hate you, Henry. Del Oro may tire. Men do tire. Then you may want me again, perhaps even as soon as the ransom is fetched. He will not hurry you with the ransom. Go back to your kingdom—what kingdom is it? Oh yes; a kingdom of two arms, is it not? And —"

"But to take you back—from him, Doris?"

"But why not? You would have me take you back, from her. But it will not be necessary. I shall try not to call upon him. He swears he loves me. Up here there are not other women to tempt him and steal him from me. Oh, women are so cruel, and men are so false, but it is the woman who suffers. I shall never suffer again. I am so happy now. It is much better to be the Lady Louise than Queen Doris. I am the Lady Louise; yes, I am. That funny man with the great head is my uncle. Oh yes; no one knows different. I want to believe it—but sometimes—and she lowered her voice, as if in confidence—"I am puzzled. You think me crazy?" she resumed. "My head does hurt—but that is better than the heart hurt; and I burn so—but that is better than being cold. You must go, Henry. Your kingdom waits. I would furnish you with a kingdom, if I could, for once I loved you; but I have no kingdom worth your notice. I am not dark enough to be your love, Henry. Sometime maybe I will be. The sun up here scorches so. Del Oro loves me; I shall stay. It is so nice to be loved. If only you might be Del Oro. You may kiss my hand, Henry—and then you must go. See—they are waiting for you. It is my left hand. Del Oro kissed my right. Call me dear—softly, Henry, like you used to. Hurry, Henry."

SIR Hugo and Del Oro had emerged from the cabin, and were standing, talking, before it, Sir Hugo's large head wagging earnestly. Now catching the king's gaze he beckoned; and Del Oro supplemented with an imperious summoning nod.

"Hurry, Henry. You must go. Get the ransom—that will be best. You need not come back; I shall be very happy. But unless the ransom is sent Del Oro will kill my uncle, and that would make me unhappy. You do not want poor, good Sir Hugo to be killed do you, Henry? And please take this black thing away. I do not want it up here. It is black, and it comes from below, and it makes me shudder. Take it, far, far away."

Again Sir Hugo beckoned, and hawk-nose nodded impatiently.

"God, have mercy! I cannot go!" moaned the king, staggering to his feet.

At that moment, from the lower end of the meadow floated conversation, laughter, and a whinney; and trudged, approaching, a group of men, bringing with them a horse, upon its back a woman.

Del Oro walked out, to intercept them, and stood waiting. King and Sir Hugo stared, wondering.

CHAPTER X.

The Woman Comes

On up the light-green level stretch came the little troupe; the men ragged, unkempt, bullies and

outlaws all, wearily plodding along; the horse, in the forefront, jaded and heavy; but the woman, swaying as she was to its every step, with head erect, peering eagerly before, right and left.

THE Duchess of Marto! Yes, true as heaven or as hell, by face and figure the Duchess of Marto!

The king uttered an involuntary exclamation, and took hasty stride forward as if to check her and turn her back. A feeling of rage at her temerity rose within him. He had no welcome for her.

The party had almost reached hawk-nose, standing waiting with folded arms. And now, looking past him, the duchess beheld the king. With a little cry, penetrating by reason of its long-pent appeal, she stretched out both hands. She would have fallen had not one of her ruffian escorts quickly grasped her as she toppled, and swung her roughly to the ground. Whimpering with her eagerness, her long dress, dead black with a slash of cunning scarlet at the throat, sadly impeding her, jeering applause following her, and Captain Del Oro turning, curiously to watch, she came running across the turf.

At her goal she tripped upon her gown, and pitched forward to the king's feet. He had only coldly witnessed her approach, and now as coldly looked down upon her as she clung to his knees, and laid her cheek against them while she panted forth her story. Her jet hair was in piteous dis-

array, for she was bareheaded; her garb was drabbed; but she still was beautiful.

"Oh, Henry! Is it you? I have searched so long. See my poor hands—look, Henry, how they are scratched and torn; and my feet. But I don't mind. Indeed, I don't, Henry. They told me about you—that you had been taken from them by robbers—by Del Oro's men. Oh, what a fright I have been in! The city is all beleaguered, Henry, but I got out—I got out. I was in the forest all night, alone, and the wolves howled, and it rained and I was cold and hungry, and afraid. But I wanted to find you, Henry. See, how I have suffered. But you have suffered, too. I did not mean that you should suffer. You would not have been harmed—they had promised me. You would have only been kept a little while, and I would have joined you. But there was some mistake. I did not fail you at the gate. I was there, at three, and there was no coach. What was the matter? I waited half an hour—a long half an hour. I thought I would see you in the morning, but instead I learned that you had gone and had been captured by Del Oro. You do not blame me, do you, Henry? I have come, too. I left everything, just to be with you. Half the day and all last night I wandered alone in the awful forest, just to be brought up here. See my hands, how they are bleeding? But I do

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Siddons of the Sextette

By LEO CRANE

(Continued from page four)

rope of blackened strands. With his face white and set, he bellowed once more across the footlights:

"There's nothing to howl over like a bally lot of children!"

And I saw him stagger, the stuff smoldering in his grasp. The woman, who had been as if frozen, caught at him as he lunged against her. I could see her fingers twist in his flannel coat as she tried to keep him upright. Then Siddons shuddered and went down in a heap.

I realized now that the orchestra had been playing all this time a very frantic driving melody, the conductor furiously waving his baton, and with a sigh I sank back into the chair, knowing that all over the house the people were sighing and dropping limply down in the same exhausted fashion.

The curtain dropped slowly. Then, as quickly as before, in a nervous, throbbing fervor, everyone sprang up with a wild cheer, a yell for Siddons—Siddons of the Sextette! The drums were drowned in the turbulent roar of humanity. And it was because of Siddons, who had been content without the noise of drums.

It took me half the night to find them, and then I would not have succeeded had it not been for the "Times" man out on the story. We sought a small hotel in a not very swell neighborhood, and in a little back room we found Siddons. His wife was busy swathing his hands over a coating of colloid, and he was not having a pleasant time of it, judging from his gritting teeth.

She came to greet me with the same sweet smile that had lured Siddons to the road and the provinces and failure; but I felt no shame now for having known Siddons of the Sextette.

Great is Baseball

By F. W. BECKMAN

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE EIGHT)

Baseball is fundamentally democratic and therefore fundamentally American.

"I see great things in baseball," said Walt Whitman in a spirit of prophecy many years ago; "it's our game, the American game."

"I find more genuine religion at a baseball game," said the late Ernest Crosby, "than I do at my father's Fifth Avenue church."

"At the baseball game we encounter real democracy of spirit," wrote the Rev. Roland D. Sawyer in the Baseball Magazine not long ago. "One thing in common absorbs us; we rub shoulders, high and low; we speak without waiting for introduction; we forget everything clannish, all the petty conventionalities being laid aside. Individual experience is submerged in a unison of human feeling; the crowd makes us one. . . . And how good it seems for us to be just human beings."

At the baseball game the fastidious rich man sits alongside the man with frightful suspenders and sweaty shirt and unshaven face and they warm up to each other as though nothing had ever separated them; they laugh together, they shout together and sometimes they engage in altercation together. When Jonesy or Brownie or Tootsie or somebody else makes a brilliant play, they nudge each other or slap each other on shoulder or knee, just like familiars. One touch of baseball makes the whole crowd kin, and men of different walks of life cannot rub shoulders and exchange felicities

and grieve and rejoice together thus without having broader human sympathies.

Not long ago a man aristocratic enough to be a contributor of the Atlantic Monthly told in a little letter to the editor of an interesting personal experience on his suburban train out of New York:

"An Italian in a blue shirt with flowered silk front, who rides home on my train every evening, reads the same newspaper sports page that I do. One day, at the narrative of the sixth inning he stopped and put his thick forefinger against the page. It marked a place where for the second time Tox had struck out to a notably slow box man. We exchanged speaking glances, shook our heads, and then read on. Thereafter we fought sympathetic battles, through the remainder of that story of the game. Finally my neighbor who sat near me arose to get off at his station.

"A greata game," he said to me.

"It certainly is," I replied."

And these two men, so different, like millions of others, became brothers for a time at least through the democracy of baseball.

Great is baseball!

Some day someone will write an epic recounting baseball glories and the wonderful deeds of its heroes; some day someone will put on canvas a wonderful baseball painting; some day someone will carve in stone a wonderful baseball statue, and story and painting and statue will live forever, for baseball is worthy of such immortalizing.