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Love and the Capello.

By W. A. Frazer.

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THE lights from the Gymbhanna club were streaming across Halpin road, and the drone of the band came lazily across the open, filtering itself through the octopus limbs of the big banyans and over the lake of roses the professor had filled the compound with. That was the professor's hobby—roses. That and snakes—only the snakes were real business, the roses were for pleasure. But both thrived equally well in Rangun, Jacquemont and the capello.

It was paradise, this land where the roses grew even as cabbage, and the hooded devils came up out of the jungle of their own accord to be dissected. So thought Professor Conti.

But the professor was over at the gym now, and the drowsy music, elbowing and jostling, the straggling lights as they crowded through the Kush-Kush tatters, mingled with the soft patter of small talk with which Minora Conti was beguiling the minutes as they sat there, she and the professor, waiting the return of the professor.

"Of course, the major's pony, Nat Thud, would win the Thawway plate," she was saying, when she stopped suddenly and staid herself as one does when a ten foot ditch suddenly opens its yawning maw under the fore feet of one's mount.

The light which streamed out from the drawing room and offered battle to the glimmer of the Gymbhanna showed the sudden paling of her cheek. Parian marble was not more white than that set face.

"Do not move, major," she said; "do not move your lips even, if you value your life."

Herkomer looked straight into the great, strong eyes of the girl, and they told him more of the danger, more of the horror, than even her words had done.

"Keep perfectly still," she continued, "and do not interfere with me in any way."

"Is it a snake?" asked the major, disregarding her injunction to remain silent.

"Yes, a cobra," the lips whispered.

"Do not move."

From the direction of Minora's eyes Herkomer knew that the hooded demon was on the high back of his chair.

Surely it was the light of inspiration which came into the eyes of this strange girl, she broke into a low Italian chant, weaving her slender arms back and forth, back and forth. Herkomer could feel that the cobra was following her movements. Great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead—not so much at his own proximity to the hated thing, but because of the grand, cool courage Minora was showing, and the risk she was running in drawing the attention of the viper to herself.

"She's going to hypnotize the beast," he thought. He knew she could do it, too; the face told him that. It seemed cowardly to sit there and allow a woman to face the snake, but her command to keep perfectly still had been as much entreaty as command, and he felt that by moving he would only increase the danger of both.

With the same sinuous movement Minora had risen from her seat and gently swaying her body as the soft cadences of the chant rose and fell, glided toward the cobra.

"My God, keep back!" Herkomer groaned, scarcely moving his lips. "Stand back and wait till he goes away."

But the chant continued, and there were the interjected two English words "Keep still!"

Before Herkomer could move or re-estimate further there was the flash of a white arm, a rustle of the soft

of the cobra, and she was there, her face close to the cobra's head, her hands raised as if to touch it.

"What do you make of it?" queried the surgeon as he hunted about for his helmet. "Make nothing of it. Only that it occurred again, and as preventive is better than cure in this country, take a run up to Darjeeling. It may save you the expense of a trip home. There is a little angel sits up above, in these days of robbery and rascalous exchange, who sends us these warnings, with a postscript added, 'Look to your liver.' So the next time your chum comes take him up to Darjeeling and let the mountain winds carpet the jungle fever out of his system."

"No, I'm quite well," said Herkomer, "quite well, and that's the deuce of it," he added plattely. "I can't make it out. Let it occur again, and as preventive is better than cure in this country, take a run up to Darjeeling. It may save you the expense of a trip home. There is a little angel sits up above, in these days of robbery and rascalous exchange, who sends us these warnings, with a postscript added, 'Look to your liver.' So the next time your chum comes take him up to Darjeeling and let the mountain winds carpet the jungle fever out of his system."

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folds of Minora's main dress, and he sprang to his feet to see the cobra being held at arm's length, firmly grasped by those slender fingers close up to its ugly wedge shaped head.

"Wait, please!" she cried, stepping back, as Herkomer advanced toward her with evident intention of taking the snake. "Father's tomtom has just driven up to the door—he will take the cobra—it is one of his patients."

She was still holding the repulsive creature at arm's length as the professor ran up the cemented steps calling for the bearer to come and take his tope.

He stopped short when he observed the grewsome tableau in front of him—stopping short until started into activity by his daughter's voice asking to be relieved of her terrible captive.

In an instant the professor laid the cobra by the tail, and calling to Minora to let go quickly, he swung him clear and, holding him thus, carried him back to the box from which he had escaped.

Overcome by the reaction, the brave girl sank into the chair she had risen from and gave way to a flood of nervous, hysterical tears.

Of course there could only be one reward for such gallantry, if the term was applied to woman's brave deeds. A "V. C." was out of the question; besides, the great Italian eyes had worked hard havoc with Herkomer before the advent of the cobra.

"Love made her brave," mused the major as his Burma pony rattled him over the metal road of the cantonment late that night; "but she's a well bred one anyway, and blood will tell. God, how she stood there and never flinched, with that devil in her hand! And then she thought of the soft maidly blushes that had swept over the sweet face as he talked to her of love, of the love that had been in his mind for days and weeks before the appearance of that sinister visitor.

With desultory complaisance Herkomer began to feel deuced glad that the

brock the nerves of a **MONA BUDDHA** will have to get her out of this."

So he rushed matters a little, and it was all settled for Christmas week. The professor gave his consent, reluctantly enough, Herkomer thought, and the count congratulated him with an ironing sneer that made Herkomer long to give him a toss in the air from which he would alight on the top of his curly black head.

When he and common sense sat face to face, as they had done that night, Minora loved him with all the strength of her high strung nature. What else is there in it for her, common sense argued, for the major's inheritance was limited to what his sword might cut down from the parrot tree, with the exception of a trifling allowance, barely large enough to settle his monthly gym account.

That was the way common sense put it, but the other, intuition, or whatever other name the unmasqued mind, or there was something behind it all, and for once in a way they were both right.

The love was there right enough, and also something else behind it, and this was the way the unmasqued mind put it: there was something behind it all, and for once in a way they were both right.

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the rances. There were figures and dancing, and the injecting of the professor's antidote, and the ceaseless marching up and down of the patient between two sturdy durwans, and the watching of a woman with a great sore heart and eyes that were too dry and hot for tears.

And the other, the one that had snatched night after night by Herkomer's bed, came and sat there, just in the center of the veranda. Herkomer would not let the durwans move the chair. "Don't disturb him," he said. "Let him sit there."

"Huzor, it is but an empty chair," said one of them. "No one sits there, snh."

But still he told them not to move the chair—they could walk around it. "He won't have long to wait now," he muttered.

"Surely the poison is making the sally a little mad," the durwan thought.

At first Herkomer felt strangely elated. It was like new wine—he was drunk on it; it was good to be bitten by a cobra. If he could only get over it, he would like to try it again—it was like and hot for tears.

And then came the poppy sleep. He begged them to let him lie down and rest.

"If you sleep, you die," the professor yelled in his ear.

The voice was far off; it was like a dream. It was the murmuring of the breakers far away on the coral reefs, and required too much energy to listen to it. Besides, he was so tired and sleepy that he could not count sheep, and down was like counting sheep; it made his head heavy.

Up and down, up and down the hard floor of the veranda, re-echoing to the clasp, the durwans' loose slippers as they marched one on either side of him.

It was a terrible race, and life was the stake.

But as the torturing hours chased each other through the long Burmese night and the gray began to steal up behind the tapering spire of the golden pagoda in the east, and the major still lived, still walked up and down between his relays of Punjabis, the professor knew that he had won—and he rubbed the hooded fiend of his victim.

And the man who came back out of the jaws of death, when he was told that he might sleep, went deep down into the rest world and lay for hours in a sleep that was first cousin to death.

When he awoke, the figure sitting beside his couch had changed. It was Minora; she who had sat there hour after hour watching that the light did not go quite out, that the sleep did not become of closer kin to death.

Very consciously the questioning eyes looked at her when she opened.

When he had grown a little stronger she told him this, told him the tale that she had tried to tell that night when he had stopped here.

"Father incited me with the cobra virus, partly as an experiment, and partly for my own safety, as his cobras were always about.

"As it seemed to be harmless, and to make it sure, he performed the operation several times. But he learned, as he is, did not force the result. It acted on me like morphine acts on those who like it injected into their veins—it became necessary to my life. The habituation you felt would be mine for days; that depression followed as a natural law.

"But why go into detail?" she added, with a faint, wan smile. "Without it I was dead. At last I became so that the bite from the cobra was only equal to the dose my father used. This was the simplest plan.

"When you first came into my life, I thought that I should overcome it, for love is the best of us."

"The night you were bitten I meant to tell you all, but to fortify myself, to summon up the moral courage to drown the love which was so great and strong, I had asked Count Rutbitino to bring me a box from my father's box. That is all; it is not pleasant, and she smiled again slowly. "I should not have allowed this love to conquer me, but now it has conquered, it has triumphed over all. I will not marry you, because I love you."

It was the best that way, "Because I love you I will not marry you."

A Little Absentminded.

The most absentminded man in Maine has been discovered in Lincoln, where he is employed in a pulp mill. His name is Wallace Jipson. One day a telegram came to the mill directed to John Wallace, and, as Jipson was known by the mill simply as Wallace, the message was handed to him. John Wallace being a new hand and known to but few of the crew. The telegram read: "Your mother is dead. Come at once." With fearful eyes and trembling steps Jipson hurried to his home, and at the door he was met by his father, who asked what was the trouble.

"Too bad, poor mother's dead—dead and gone! Boo-hoo!" sobbed Jipson.

The elder Jipson took the telegram from his son's hand, read it and then remarked, "You dinged fool, didn't you know your mother died five years ago?" At this the son woke up and began to look foolish. "You go back to that mill, you gibbering idiot!" yelled Jipson senior. And Jipson junior went, bearing the sad message to the man for whom it was intended—Exchange.

Back! Do not touch it!" another, for perhaps your answer will suffice to both questions. What have you got in that drawer?"

If Minora had not gone white with guilty fear, it might have been all right yet, but it was the faltering which developed the tiger in the man. He took a quick step forward and grasped her wrist cruelly, harshly, as he fairly hissed out, "You have a letter or something from him there?"

"My God!" she moaned. "Back! Do not touch it! If you touch that drawer, I will never marry you—never." With an exclamation of rage he brushed her to one side, and snatching the drawer open, plunged his hand in.

There was the lightning flash of a dark body like the coil of a whip in motion; an electric shooting of pain through his arm which brought an involuntary cry of anguish from his lips and the twisting, writhing of the hideous cobra as he snatched his hand from the death trap.

A piercing scream had rung out on the still night air, for he pulled the drawer open, for, powerless to stop him, Minora had foreseen that he was drawing to his death.

It was the scream that brought the professor to the room.

"Quick, father! Rolando is bitten," and before the major knew what he was about, the professor had grasped his wrist as in a vise and pulled him into his own room, which was next.

From that on it was a head and head clash, with the professor and death as

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