turned. "I thought Stefano had been left behind?"

Raffles was round in a flash, his face white hot, his eyes dancing death.

"He was in the cave!" he shouted. "I saw him—I spotted him—it was broad twilight after those stairs—and I went for him with my bare hands; not fists, Bunny; not fists for a thing like that. I meant getting my fingers into his vile little heart and tearing it out by the roots. I was stark mad. But he had the revolver—hers. He blazed it at arm's length and missed. And that steadied me. I had smashed his funny bone against the rock before he could blaze again. The revolver fell with a rattle, but without going off. In an instant I had it tight and the little swine at my mercy at last."

"You didn't show him any?"

"Mercy? With Faustina dead at my feet? I should have deserved none in the next world if I had shown him any in this! No; I just stood over him, with the revolver in both hands, feeling the chambers with my thumb, and as I stood he stabbed at me, but I stepped back to that one and brought him down with a bullet in his guts.

"'And I can spare you two or three more,' I said, for my poor girl could not have fired a shot. 'Take that one—and that—and that!'

"Then I started coughing and wheezing like the count himself, for the place was full of smoke. When it cleared my man was very dead, and I tipped him into the sea to defile that rather than Faustina's cave. And then—and then—we were alone for the last time, she and I, in our own pet haunt, and I could scarcely see her, yet I would not strike a match, for I knew she would not have me see her as she was. I could say goodby to her without that. I said it, and I left her like a man and up the first open air steps with my head in the air and the stars all sharp in the sky. Then suddenly they swam, and back I went like a lunatic to see if she was really dead, to bring her back to life— Bunny, I can't tell you any more."

"Not of the count?" I murmured at last.

"Not even of the count," said Raffles, turning round with a sigh. "I left him pretty sorry for himself, but what was the good of that? I had taken blood for blood, and it was not Corbucci who had killed Faustina. No; the plan was his, but that was not part of the plan. They had found out about our meetings in the cave; nothing simpler than to have me kept hard at it overhead and to carry off Faustina by brute force in the boat. It was their only chance, for she had said more to Stefano than she had admitted to me and more than I am going to repeat about myself. No persuasion would have induced her to listen to him again, so they tried force, and she drew Corbucci's revolver on them, but they had taken her by surprise, and Stefano stabbed her before she could fire."

"But how do you know all that?" I asked Raffles, for his tale was going to pieces in the telling, and the tragic end of poor Faustina was no ending for me.

"Oh," said he, "I had it from Corbucci at his own revolver's point. He was waiting at his window, and I could have potted him at my ease where he stood against the light listening hard enough, but not seeing a thing. So he asked whether it was Stefano, and I whispered, 'Si, signore,' and then whether he had finished Arturo, and I brought the same shot off again. He had let me in before he knew who was finished and who was not."

"And did you finish him?"

"No. That was too good for Corbucci, but I bound and gagged him about as tight as a man was ever gagged or bound, and I left him in his room, with the shutters shut and the house locked up. The shutters of that old place were six inches thick and the walls nearly six feet. That was on the Saturday night, and the count wasn't expected at the vineyard before the following Saturday. Meanwhile he was supposed to be in Rome, but the dead would doubtless be discovered next day, and I am afraid this would lead to his own discovery, with the life still in him. I believe he figured on that himself, for he sat threatening me gamely till the last. You never saw such a sight as he was, with his head split in two by a ruler tied at the back of it, and his great mustache pushed up into his bulging eyes, but I locked him up in the dark without a qualm, and I wished and still wish him every torment of the damned."

"And then?"

"The night was still young, and within ten miles there was the best of ports in a storm and hundreds of holds for the humble stowaway to choose from, but I didn't want to go farther than Genoa, for by this time my Italian would wash, so I chose the old Norddeutscher Lloyd and had an excellent voyage in one of the boats slung inboard over the bridge. That's better that any hold, Bunny, and I did splendidly on oranges brought from the vineyard."

"And at Genoa?"

"At Genoa I took to my wits once more and have been living on nothing else ever since, but there I had to begin all over again and at the very bottom of the ladder. I slept in the streets. I begged. I did all manner of terrible things, rather hoping for a bad end, but never coming to one. Then one day I saw a white headed old chap looking at me through a shop window—a window I had designs upon—and when I stared at him he stared at me, and we wore the same rags! So I had come to that! But one reflection makes many. I had not recognized myself. Who on earth would recognize me? London called me, and here I am. Italy had broken my heart, and there it stays."

Flippant as a schoolboy one moment, playful even in the bitterness of the next, and now no longer giving way to the feeling which had spoiled the climax of his tale, Raffles needed knowing as I alone knew him for a right appreciation of those last words. That they were no mere words I know full well. That but for the tragedy of his Italian life that life would have sufficed him for years, if not forever, I did and do still believe. But I alone see him as I saw him then, the lines upon his face and the pain behind the lines. How they came to disappear and what removed them you will never guess. It was the one thing you would have expected to have the opposite effect, the thing, indeed, that had forced his confidence, the organ and the voice once more beneath our very windows:

Margarita de Parete,
era a' sarta d' e' signore;
se pugneva sempe e ddete
pe penzare a Salvatore!
Mar—ga—ri,
e perzo e Salvatore!

Mar—ga—ri,
Ma l' ommo e cacciatore!
Mar—ga—ri,
Nun ce aje corpa tu!
Chello ch' e fatto, e fatto, un ne parlammo echieu!

I simply stared at Raffles. Instead of deepening, his lines had vanished. He looked years younger, mischievous and merry and alert as I remembered him of old in the breathless crisis of some madcap escapade. He was holding up his finger; he was stealing to the window; he was peeping through the blind as though our side street were Scotland Yard itself; he was stealing back again, all revelry, excitement and suspense.

"I half thought they were after me before," said he. "That was why I made you look. I daren't take a proper look myself, but what a jest if they were! What a jest!"

"Do you mean the police?" said I.

"The police! Bunny, do you know them and me so little that you can look me in the face and ask such a question?

"I locked him up without a qualm."

My boy, I'm dead to them—off their books—a good deal deader than being off the hooks! Why, if I went to Scotland Yard this minute to give myself up they'd chuck me out for a harmless lunatic. No, I fear an enemy nowadays, and I go in terror of the sometime friend, but I have the utmost confidence in the dear police."

"Then whom do you mean?"

"The Camorra!"

I repeated the word with a different intonation. Not that I had never heard of that most powerful and sinister of secret societies, but I failed to see on what grounds Raffles should jump to the conclusion that these everyday organ grinders belonged to it.

"It was one of Corbucci's threats," said he. "If I killed him the Camorra would certainly kill me. He kept on telling me so. It was like his cunning not to say that he would put them on my tracks whether or no."

"He is probably a member himself!"

"Obviously, from what he said."

"But why on earth should you think that these fellows are?" I demanded as that brazen voice came rasping through a second verse.

"I don't think. It was only an idea. That thing is so thoroughly Neapolitan, and I never heard it on a London organ before. Then, again, what should bring them back here?"

I peeped through the blind in my turn, and, to be sure, there was the fellow with the blue chin and the white teeth watching our windows, and ours only, as he bawled.

"And why?" cried Raffles, his eyes dancing when I told him. "Why should they come sneaking back to us. Doesn't that look suspicious, Bunny; doesn't that promise a lark?"

"Not to me," I said, having the smile for once. "How many people, should you imagine, toss them 5 shillings for as many minutes of their infernal row? You seem to forget that that's what you did an hour ago!"

Raffles had forgotten. His blank face confessed the fact. Then suddenly he burst out laughing at himself.

"Bunny," said he, "you've no imagination, and I never knew I had so much! Of course you're right. I only wish you were not, for there's nothing I should enjoy more than taking on another Neapolitan or two. You see, I owe them something still. I didn't settle in full. I owe them more than ever I shall pay them on this side Styx!"

He had hardened even as he spoke; the lines and the years had come again, and his eyes were flint and steel, with an honest grief behind the glitter.

(To be Continued.)

HESPER

By HAMLIN GARLAND

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(Continued From Page Nine.)

his new raid he became greatly excited.

"There's going to be a battle," he said to Ann. "I'm going."

"No, no!" she pleaded.

He turned upon her with a resentful stamp of his heel. "I can't stay here like a kid."

She changed her tone. "Very well. When shall we start?"

He looked at her steadily, and into his eyes came a softer gleam. "I've just thought," he began reflectively; "you can stay with Mrs. Kelly till we build a wing for you. She's a nice woman and lives in the cunningest little log cabin. That settles it! We will go right away, today!"

Ann was at a loss, but did not show it. "If you are determined to go, then there is no use in waiting. Let us start at once!"

While Mrs. Barnett suggested what to wear Don ordered a carriage to take Ann and himself to the train, and Louis saddled his horse for his return trip up the stage road. "I'll beat you up," he shouted to Ann and galloped away with shining face.

The railway which ran up Bear canyon was still building and had not yet reached the divide, so that a stage ride of some twenty miles connected the town of Grand View with Sky camp. Ann and Barnett were noticeable persons in the car, which was filled with roughly clad workmen of all kinds. Ann was conscious of their admiration for her, and it deeply annoyed her. Two or three of the better dressed men, who were on speaking acquaintance with Barnett, came up to ask him what he thought of the strike.

"I didn't know it was a strike," said he, ignoring their evident desire to be introduced to Ann.

"Oh, it's a strike all right. Your man Mackay wasn't much hurt, was he?"

"Not badly."

"He was a little too previous. I hope the sheriff won't try to do anything more about it. The boys up at Sky are a little sharp set about that business. Ain't goin' up there yourself, are ye?"

"Yes; I've always been on good terms with my men. I think I can help to arrange some sort of a compromise."

The two miners looked at each other. At length the older of them said in a tone that meant a good deal to ears accustomed to western inflections: "Well, I reckon the whole thing has been exaggerated. My claim is just below Bozie, and so, of course, I don't know much more about Sky than you do. Still I wouldn't advise your going in at this time."

At Grand View a couple of stages met them, and as Ann waited on the platform for Don to secure a carriage she observed that on the seat of each of the coaches two guards sat, negligently nursing rifles which glittered in the sunlight. Soon the whips began to crack, and the coaches rolled away one by one, leaving Barnett to follow in a road wagon which he had hired for their own especial use.

The sun was sinking to midafternoon, and Mogalyon on the left was in full glory of ermine and saffron. The air was keen and crisp, the sky cloudless, and the road, except for an occasional mudhole, was very good. Barnett remarked, "We ought to pull into Bozie before dark on these roads."

Night came abruptly. A thin gray scum rose swiftly on the western sky and suddenly grayed the brightness of the sun. The world grew instantly stern and cold. The road, after climbing a ridge, descended into a gorge with firs on either side, and when they came out upon the flat meadow to the northwest of Mogalyon only the lights of Skytown could be seen.

At the moment that Don was pointing out the lights two horsemen appeared in front and in the middle of the road.

"Halt!" cried a clear voice.

The driver pulled his tired horses to a stand so energetically that his hands rose above his head.

"Is Donnelly Barnett with you?" asked one of the men as he rode nearer.

"I'm Barnett. What do you want of me?" asked Don coolly.

"Not a thing," answered the horseman. "That's just it. We have no use for you, and I've been watching to meet you and say that the boys want you to continue your quiet, uneventful life at the Springs."

"Who are you?"

"We're a couple of Skytown vedettes. Who is the lady?"

"That doesn't concern you. Go on, driver."

The driver took up the reins, but the voice of the vedette grew sterner, "Stay where you are!" Then, turning to Barnett: "I'm your best friend, Donnelly. The boys understand that you are backing Mackay in his plans, and it isn't safe for you to enter the camp. I advise you to turn around right here and go back."

Ann spoke up: "Please let us go on. Mr. Barnett is taking me in to meet my brother, and I am cold and hungry."

There was something thrilling in the calm, clear sweetness of her voice, and the first of the vedettes, pressing nearer, leaned from his saddle to ask:

"Who is your brother, lady?"

"His name is Louis Rupert. He is only a boy, and I am going in to care for him."

"Bob Raymond's kid. I know him," replied the vedette. "But I thought he was visiting you in the Springs."

"He was, but he went back to the camp today, and I am very anxious about him."

"He's all right, lady, so long as Rob Raymond has him in hand. You are welcome, but Barnett is on the outside and must stay there."

"I decline to acknowledge your authority," responded Barnett, now thoroughly angry.

The horseman laughed softly, irritatingly. "Manners don't go with us at the present time. I must ask you to camp right here or go back to Grand View till I can communicate with the president of the union. If you are here to talk compromise the men will be glad to meet you, but my judgment is that you better retire to Grand View. I will see that this lady gets to her brother."

Ann was not a timid girl, but the thought of riding away into the blackness of the night with these sinister guards made her flesh chill and her nerves creep. "Don't leave me, Don," she whispered.

Barnett stormed at the horsemen. "It is impossible! If I am forced to go back she must go with me. What right have you to interfere in our plans?"

The answer came quickly, coldly, every word telling. "I'll tell you. The boys have learned that you have been chiefly instrumental in pushing the sheriff into another raid, and if trouble comes they'll kill you. It isn't safe for you to be on the hill tomorrow. Now you needn't be afraid to trust the lady to me." The vedette removed his hat. "I am not a man to be feared by women."

Ann again spoke. "I can't consent to your going into danger for me, Don. Turn back, and I will go on."

"It is madness!" he said in a low voice. "These men are not fit escorts for you. We will both go back and wait—until morning."

Ann's teeth were chattering with cold. "I dread that long drive. We must be almost at our destination."

The two horsemen conferred together, and at last one of them returned to say: "Driver, you may come on until you reach the first cabin at the foot of the hill. There the lady will get out, and you will drive Mr. Barnett back before daylight tomorrow morning."

As they drew up before the shanty door the leader of the vedettes rode forward and said gently: "Lady, the road from here to the summit is lined with cabins, and no harm can possibly come to you while I have you in charge. Or, if you like, you can stay here till morning; but I would advise you to go on to Mrs. Kelly's. There is no cabin suited to your needs on this side of the peak."

Ann, stiff and weary and hungry, rose in her seat with a sort of desperation. "I will go," she said with trembling voice.

The vedette, dismounting quickly, helped her to the ground, while the second man, leaning low on his horse, entered into a muttered conversation with an unkempt man in the doorway.

Barnett argued and insisted on going on to Kelly's.

"Not one step farther!" sternly commanded the vedette. "But you can sleep here till daylight if you wish."

Ann interposed. "Don, I beg of you to go home. I don't want you to go any farther. I am not afraid now. This man will take me to Mrs. Kelly's. I'm sure of it, and Louis will be there by this time, and Mr. Raymond."

"Sure thing, lady. And it isn't late—not more than 7 o'clock. We'll almost get there in time for supper. Can you ride a horse?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will put you on my saddle, and I will walk and lead the horse." The light from the doorway fell upon him as he approached her, and the sight of his boyish face reassured her.

As Barnett saw her rise to the saddle he burst out: "This is preposterous! You must not go up there. The boy isn't worth it. I'm going with you or fight!" He drew his revolver, but some one caught his hand from behind and twisted the weapon out of his grasp.

"Go on, Jack. We'll take care of him," called the man in the cabin door.

As the light of the lamp was left behind and the darkness settled round

"Halt!" cried a clear voice.

her a convulsive terror seized upon the girl. The horse, stumbling over loose rocks in the road, which ran back and forth on the hillside like folds of braid, passed now and again under dark and silent pines.

Once, as her guard came back toward her, something rose in her throat, some elemental dread, and her breath rushed hoarsely through her lips. "If Robert only knew my need of him," she thought, "he would surely come to me."

The man's voice was gentle as he said: "You see, lady, the camp is in a terrible excitement. We heard today that the sheriff was coming with a posse, and the boys kind o' hold five or six o' those one lungers in the Springs responsible. They are particularly down on Barnett for putting Mackay up to that trick. But you'll be perfectly safe at Kelly's."

At length Ann's leader turned toward a dark, high point of rocks, the trail began to descend and a few minutes later they came to a warmly lighted cabin, on the door of which the guide resolutely knocked. The latch was immediately lifted, and a small, pale woman with a blur of yellow hair about her head appeared in the light.

"Mrs. Kelly, I've brought you a boarder," began the vedette.

Ann caught sight of a boy at the table and gave a cry of joy. "Oh, Louis, Louis!"

With a whoop the boy rushed from the cabin and flung his arms around her.

"Oh, Ann, but I'm glad to see you! Where is Cousin Don? Which way did you come? Rob has gone down to Bozie to meet you."

Ann turned to thank her guide, who was looking at her with undisguised admiration.

"It was a great pleasure," he replied, with an assumption of grand manner. "Introduce me, please," he said to Mrs. Kelly.

"I must introduce myself first," said the little woman. "I am Mrs. Kelly, and your guard is Mr. Jack Munro."

Ann gave him her hand. "I thank Mr. Munro, but I think he should have allowed Mr. Barnett to come into shelter. It seemed cruel to send him back on that long, cold drive."

Munro remained unmoved. "Oh, he'll stay at Clayson's overnight."

Mrs. Kelly put in a word. "I think you better come into shelter. You must be cold and hungry. Won't you step inside, Mr. Munro?"

"No, thank you. It is a great temptation, but I've work to do."

And so, chilled and hungry, Ann entered the pleasant home of the Kellys, and the terror of the dark ride became a part of the outer world, shut away by the strong, rude door.

"Rob has gone down to the stage office," explained Mrs. Kelly. "We thought you'd come that way."

Mrs. Kelly put Ann down to some tea and cold meat, and while she was still at the table and in the midst of her story Raymond flung open the door.

"Here she is!" he called to some one behind him, and his white face and glowing eyes testified to his great anxiety.

Ann rose to meet him with a rush of trust and confidence that filled her throat and rendered her wordless, but she held her hand toward him.

He seized it. "I was greatly alarmed when I heard that you were coming alone. How did you come? How did you find the way?"

Ann then said, "Your friend Munro met us, turned Don back and piloted me up the hill."

Raymond turned to a big man who stood waiting. "Miss Rupert, this is Matthew Kelly, my mining partner."

Ann gave her hand into Kelly's enormous palm with a look of admiration. "I am glad to know you, Mr. Kelly. I have heard Louis speak of you very often."

In the presence of these men Ann lost all sense of fear and weakness. They were possessed of something which Don, loyal as he was, lacked.

Raymond's eyes hardly left her face, but she no longer resented his interest. On the contrary, she studied him closely. There was a subtle change in him. He seemed older, gentler, but more manly and handsomer than before.

"It is a rude place for you to live, Miss Rupert," he said, "but there is no danger. The strike has not involved us. We are as peaceful as a farm here."

She smiled back into his eyes with more of liking than she had ever expressed.

"I am not afraid," she replied. "I am going to find the camp interesting. At any rate, so long as Louis is settled in his determination to be a miner, I must keep him in sight."

"It is a great pleasure to have him with me, and I am glad to be of use to him, for his own sake as well as for what you have come to mean to me."

Ann's lashes fell before the glow of his admiring eyes, and with this sign of weakness a flush of resentment again passed over her. "He must not look at me in that way," she complained to herself.

When Raymond left the house to walk back to his own cabin he resented for the first time the presence of Louis. He wished to be alone with the mysterious emotion which had swept back upon him at sight of Ann. He faced the night, out of which every shred of vapor had vanished, and the blue-black vault, blazing with innumerable jetting globes of light, invited to high thoughts, to serious imaginings.

His duty plainly was to lay hands upon the lad and hustle him back to Valley Springs and so put both brother and sister out of his life; but this was not easy. He argued that she was in no danger and that the change of air would do her good. "She will be interested in the mines," he went on in formless debate with himself. "The scenery is magnificent; and then, of course, she can go down at any time we think wise."

(To be Continued.)

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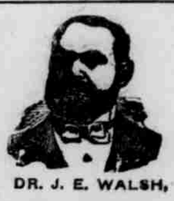

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