

ferocity and the beauty that lies in a spray of hawthorn, or the flight of a Ho-Ho bird—and colour.

The door opened and a young girl came into the room. She did not look more than fifteen, yet she seemed to have stepped out of a past age. The age of Greuze.

It was the Baroness Hauptmarch.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BARONESS HAUPTMARCH

WELL, well, there are shocks that one recovers from almost at once, owing to the tonic of their wonder, and when the girl had stated who she was it did not take Jean a moment to adapt himself to the idea that this girl was not only the redoubtable Baroness, but the mistress of Stein.

It came to him at once that she was a bit older than she looked, that she was no innocent, that the charm of her manner was a continuation of the charm of her face and body, but everything was nothing compared with the fact that she was his for ever and ever, and that he only had to make her his own!

He had never seen any one of like appeal to his genius.

And he felt that he could make her his own. Love! Nonsense, no more than the thought of love for Herdjiman's wife (whom he had met, for he sometimes visited the good Herdjiman in his little home). Power—that was it. He had the power to make this woman, this girl, his, so that men in future ages would speak of the Baroness Hauptmarch by

Matisse, and looking on her face look upon his name. They would each give the other immortality.

He knew that this would not be all ; he knew that many other portraits of other people would pass from his brush to be treasured by posterity, and he knew that fact only now. He had always been a half-doubter, not quite sure of himself, sure one moment, doubting the next. Now, in a moment, this lovely being so suffused with the charm of Spring and the sentiment of Romance, opened the door for him, took him by the hand and said, "Come, we will go into the Future."

Yet she had spoken scarcely a word.

Looking at him as he stood there, awkward and seeming half tongue-tied, she knew at once that she had reduced him to this condition at a stroke, she did not know that it was the artist not the man that had fallen on his knees ; had she known would she have been pleased or dissatisfied, I wonder ?

Then in a moment they were talking together, and the ice once broken, Jean was himself again, with an added something that gave him strange life and charm.

All the strength of his youth blossomed beneath the sudden sun that shone on him, untapped sources of energy broke from their wells, bringing the gladness of strength that is only known by the poet, the artist and the musician, when the Great Idea comes to them with the knowledge that they have power to cope with it and cage it, and make it their own.

Jean spoke of his journey and of delays that had made him late in getting to Ragusa. He would have talked of onions as gladly and as charmingly in her eyes, she who only had real ears for the manner of his speech.

They came almost at once to the portrait. In this matter she was as interested almost as himself.

Stein had spoken of this new artist who had the "lost touch."

Sidonie Hauptmarch—we will leave her title to the curious examination of the Heralds—had been photographed once, but never again. She had destroyed the negative and all copies. The camera could no more catch her than a fishing net a moon-beam. It had caught her face and her hair and her pose and her dress, but not her. It had killed her whose charm was life.

She had a knowledge of and a feeling for her own beauty, not a bit lessened by the passionate adoration of Stein.

And he knew. He had contemptuously refused the idea of all contemporary painters, Lorrillard, Vauban, the Englishman; painters and plasterers he called them, and then at an inn he had fallen in with a young Frenchman who had made a little picture of a girl, a thing done in a moment, yet revealing the mastery of that curious something in art which is akin to music.

It was true that he might materialise badly, but he was worth trying.

He would be in Ragusa in a few weeks. He did not come, he was overdue, perhaps he had fallen sick or died, or gone off back to France.

Then came Business. Stein was called back to Berlin and went, almost forgetting Jean.

"And he has only been gone a few days," said Sidonie; "but he will soon return, and how nice if the picture were done by his return!"

Yes, the painting materials had arrived, the canvas and all.

Like a business woman she led the way to a

room with a top light on the second floor ; Stein had had it prepared, he had thought out everything.

“ And the dress ? ” she asked.

“ That dress,” said Jean, looking at the garment she wore, a mist-blue morning-gown suggestive of bluebells in the haze of the woods of Spring.

CHAPTER XV

THE PICTURE

HE did not stay more than an hour in all. There was no suggestion that he should remain to luncheon, or that his position was other than an entirely business one. He might have been a man come about the refurnishing or decoration of the house. This pleased him, if anything. He preferred remaining at a distance from the object of his passion, not to see her in the morning till she walked into the studio, not to see her till next day when he began his day's work.

The eye can be surfeited and the hand. Yes, he did not want to be treated as a man of her set, but just as a workman, and he did not want especially to see her again after he had re-created her on canvas—except in the Salon, well hung.

Coming down to the quay, he called upon Herdjiman for some rope the boatman had promised to get him from the big harbour.

Herdjiman lived in the street of the Winds. In Ragusa one is so struck by the fineness of the main thoroughfares that the little streets, some mere alleys, are apt to escape one's notice, but Ragusa has a large population, larger than one