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CHAPTER X.

Long since the moon has mounted the heavens; now it is at its full. A myriad stars keep company with it in the hues of sleeping beauty's joys; homage to her. Solitary, silent, from the old bell tower, the twelve strokes of midnight have sounded on the air.

Vera, rising cautiously from beside Griselda, who is, as usual, sleeping the sleep of the just, slips gently on to the bare white across which the moonbeams are traveling deliciously.

Silently she entered her. Weary at last of her efforts to lose herself and her hate thoughts in unconsciousness, she determines to rise and try what study may do for her. She steps lightly across the room, opens the door and speeds with all haste over the corridor, gauzy and ghostly in the dim light, down the grand old staircase, and enters a room on the left of the library, where one day she made the discovery that comfort was to be found here.

Striking a match, she lights a lamp upon a side table and proceeds to examine the book shelves. Taking down one that she thinks will please her, Vera kneels upon one of the deep window seats, and begins slowly, trying to pierce the secret and sacred gloom.

The opening of the door arouses her. It is only an hour later—an hour forgotten by her as she read. With a sudden start she looks up, turning her face over her shoulder to the door, to see who it was that had come in at this unhappy hour. Her heart grows cold within her as she sees—Seaton.

In silence they stare at each other. Vera, indeed, so great is her astonishment, forgets to rise, but sits there curled up among her furs, with a little frozen look of fear and detestation on her perfect face.

"I have disturbed you," says Seaton at last, breaking the spell, and speaking in a voice that is unnatural to me."

"Did I not I should have found privacy somewhere, at some hour," says she coldly.

"I came for a book," he says, contritely. "Now that I am here, will you permit me to say a few words in my own defense?"

"One defense!" says she, with undignified scorn.

"Certainly. I would prove to you how entirely you have wronged me," says he firmly. "I acknowledge that once my father expressed a wish that I should marry you," coloring darkly, "always provided you were willing to accept me as your husband." "I acceded to that wish."

"But why, why?" demands she, flashing round at him.

"Do not wonder at your question. It seems impossible there should be a reason," replies he, coldly; "for ever since the first hour we met you have treated me with uniform unkindness. I had no cause."

"There is a reason, nevertheless," says she, hotly. "She has come a step or two nearer to him, and her large, lustrous eyes, uplifted, seem to look defiance into his. 'Your reason I can fathom—but your father's—that I confess, puzzles me. Why could he have got so much money, the penniless daughter of the brother he defrauded to be—'"

"Defrauded?" interrupts Seaton, with a frown.

"Call it what you will," with an expressive gesture of her hand, "undertake his defense, too. I'll remember that those malicious deeds that gave to your father what should have been ours was undoubtedly drawn up by my uncle. I have heard all about it a hundred times. Your father hardly denied it to mine when last writing to him. His taking us home to live with him, I suppose, a sort of reparation. That's all right, he says—is that a reparation, too?"

She is as pale as death, and the hands that cling to the back of the chair near her are trembling. But her lips are firm and her eyes flashing. It occurs to Seaton, gazing at her in breathless silence, that if she could have exterminated him then and there by a look she would have done it.

"You degrade yourself and me when you talk like that," says Seaton, who is now as pale as she is. "For heaven's sake try to remember how abominably you misrepresent the whole thing. If my father had a freak of this kind in his head—a desire to see you married to his only son—surely there was no disservice to you contained in such a desire. It was rather—you know well enough—his arrangement on his part. It was more—"

"He loves me; in wishing to see you my wife he paid you the highest compliment he could. I defy you to regard it in any other light."

"You plead his cause well—is your own," says she, tapping the back of the chair with taper, angry and pale. "Why take the trouble? I think you are trying to view these cases in a lenient light. Am I likely to forget that you aided and abetted your father in trying to force me into this detested marriage?"

"Play put that marriage out of your head," says he, slowly. "You have taken it too seriously. I assure you I would not marry you now if you were as willing as you are unwilling. I can hardly get stronger."

"When my grandfather left this property to your father," she says, slowly, "the lot it purposely unentitled. Your father, then, were you to cross his wishes, could leave you, as I have been left, penniless. To avoid that you would fall in with any such new plan, I would even sacrifice yourself as to—marry me!" Oh, the contempt in her tone!

There is a long pause. Then Seaton, striding forward, seizes her by both arms and turns her more directly to the light. The grasp of his hands is as a vice, and—afterward—it seemed to her that he had, involuntarily, as it were, shaken her slightly.

"How dare you?" he says, in a low, concentrated tone. She can see that his face is pale, and that it is with difficulty he restrains himself; she is conscious, too, perhaps, of feeling a little frightened.

Then he puts her quickly from him and turns away.

"Ishua, you are not worth it!" he says, his manner full of the most intense self-contempt.

"There is nothing dishonorable," she says, steadily. "I love you; I am glad you know it. Despise me if you can, reject me as I know you will, I am still the better for the thought that I have laid bare to you all my heart. And now—you cannot stay here," goes on with quickened beating to wait for her next words. "The night is cold and damp. There is the summer house over there, pointing in its direction. I go and rest there, till I call you."

Vera hastens to the shelter suggested, and sinking down upon the one seat it contains, a round rustic chair in the last stage of decay, gives way to the overpowering fatigues that for the last hour have been oppressing her. Reluctantly she does what she must, and goes off. Obstinate determination to fight sleep to the last, she presently succumbs to that kindly tyrant, and falls into one of the most delicious slumbers she has ever yet experienced.

Lord Kitchener, who will be chief commander in South Africa, is the idol of the British army, and is popularly known as "Bobs." He is regarded by the military authorities of the leading countries of Europe as the foremost British commander of the Victorian era, his celebrated forced march to Kandahar constituting one of the finest feats of English arms in modern times.

ROBERTS AND KITCHENER, WHO HEAD ENGLISH FORCES.

## HEROES OF TWO WARS

JNE REAPED Undying Fame in the Celebrated March to Kandahar, the Other Won Glory on the Bloody Banks of the Soudan.

The seriousness of the war situation in South Africa has stirred up England as she has not been stirred up before in three-quarters of a century and has led to her ordering to the scene of hostilities two of her ablest generals, Field Marshal Lord Roberts, and Major-General Kitchener, the one the hero of Kandahar, in Asia, and the other the hero of Omdurman in Africa.

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times.

Lord Frederick S. Roberts was born in 1832 and was educated at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. He was only 19 years old when he went to India and entered the Bengal artillery as a lieutenant. Here he labored unknown to fame until the Indian mutiny, when he was attached to the column which was sent to attack Delhi, the forces of the rebellion. The position of the small British force before the capital of the insurrection was for months a perilous one. Fighting was of daily occurrence, the mutineers having an inexhaustible supply of ammunition. Roberts came under fire for the first time in a skirmish, when four of his party were killed and thirty wounded. Soon afterward, in another skirmish, he was hit in the eye, which caused him to lose his sight for a time.

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