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one besides Victor and me—so much was sure—had recognized the singer. Mrs. Cobb, deep in conversation with her new friend the Duchess, could not spare a glance to notice her beloved boy's agitation. The others, if they perceived anything amiss, naturally attributed any slight disorder to the champagne which the host, according to his genial custom, had absorbed freely during the evening. So I alone of all the company understood why our destination had been changed from the roof garden of the Waldorf to this other where the air was higher and the entertainment so much more amusing; though certainly, if Victor had expected gratification either to his feelings or to his curiosity, one could read in his disturbed face that for his own enjoyment he had gone a bit too far.

On the stage Fay began her song. Though as a usual thing I can't understand English when it is sung, still her diction was very clear and sharp, like her voice. So the words came to me distinctly,—sentimental words they were, all about someone who had given someone else a little silver ring, and then the person had proved false, and the first one was dying of a broken heart, and so on. It was evident that Victor understood the words too; for his face changed from white to red; his very eyes changed color as though he were going to cry. Like a child watching a show of marionettes, he sat with his gaze fixed on the singer, and never noticed even when the waiter put lobster on his plate and filled up his glass with wine.

On the stage I must own that the young singer made a sufficiently charming figure, with her blond head shining against the dark background of palms. Her white dress, made high in the neck and with no trimming but a pink ribbon sash, gave her a very innocent, youthful sort of look, very different from the day she had come to inspect me at Bar Harbor.

Then I perceived one rather startling fact,—her large, shining eyes were fixed directly upon Victor, whose agitation, whether due to self-consciousness or to genuine emotion, was every moment increasing. And it was at him, directly to him out of all her languid or distracted audience, that she sang her woeful chanson, in a voice that ran with tears:

When I at last shall lie all pale amid the roses,
I would that on my withering finger should be
The little silver ring that once thou gavest me.

Thus the song came to its mournful end. On the last word, as she turned to leave the stage, she lifted her hand with a sudden passionate gesture and kissed the ring that sparkled upon it. The next instant she had vanished, followed by a little faint applause. And I heard Victor's voice, in a quick breath that was barely audible:

"Good Lord! My ring!"

To do him justice, it wasn't any cheap little silver ring, but an enormous diamond, as large as mine or bigger. I glanced around. Not a soul but me had noticed the little interlude. With a sigh that seemed as though it would burst the buttons of his white brocade waistcoat, he turned to the lobster on his plate. But it was evident that the pathetic image conjured up by Fay's last words still followed him; he ate listlessly and had need of frequent recourse to the champagne. How I despised him at that moment, this man who was to be my husband!

UNDER the pleasing influence of supper, the conversation had taken a brisk reaction from the depressing neighborhood of the stars. At the little table that made the center of our group, Aunt Elizabeth was holding forth in a loud voice, just as she always did when we had people from Brentpool to dinner at the castle.

"Ermentrude, my dear, take some of the salad. It's not half so nasty as it looks. But the lobster, though it's fresh,—yes, it seems quite fresh,—is incorrectly cooked. Your broil a porterhouse, my dear Mrs. Cobb; not a lobster. A lobster should be potted, with a great deal of melted butter, allspice, cloves, and pepper—much pepper. Portia, my love, you remember the excellent potted lobster that we ate at the little inn on the hill near Eastbourne last summer?"

For once in her life, however, Portia was too absorbed to answer her imposing mama's query; for the brother of the Princess, it was plain, had met his fate. His wine remained untouched in its glass, he leaned toward her with hypnotized gaze, drinking in her words as a good communicant accepts the *Bon Dieu*. A little pang that was half envy and half sincere pleasure shot through my heart. Poor Portia! Had her unbounded aspiration at last brought its own fulfillment, had she found the man who should come offering her his heart and a fortune too?

All about me was that merry chorus made up of popping bottles, of tinkling forks, of flirting and joking and laughter. On the little stage a new number had succeeded to the



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