

*Sheba Blake Publishing Corp.*

# 54-40

OR FIGHT

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**EMERSON HOUGH**

*54-40 or Fight*

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*TO Theodore Roosevelt*  
*PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND*  
*FIRM BELIEVER IN THE RULE OF THE PEOPLE*  
*THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED WITH THE LOYALTY AND*  
*ADMIRATION OF THE AUTHOR*

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## One

# *The Makers of Maps*



**T**here is scarcely a single cause in which a woman is not engaged in some way fomenting the suit.—*Juvenal*.

“Then you offer me no hope, Doctor?” The gray mane of Doctor Samuel Ward waved like a fighting crest as he made answer:

“Not the sort of hope you ask.” A moment later he added: “John, I am ashamed of you.”

The cynical smile of the man I called my chief still remained upon his lips, the same drawn look of suffering still remained upon his gaunt features; but in his blue eye I saw a glint which proved that the answer of his old friend had struck out some unused spark of vitality from the deep, cold flint of his heart.

“I never knew you for a coward, Calhoun,” went on Doctor Ward, “nor any of your family I give you now the benefit of my personal acquaintance with this generation of the Calhouns. I ask something more of you than faint-heartedness.”

The keen eyes turned upon him again with the old flame of flint which a generation had known—a generation, for the most part, of enemies. On my

chief's face I saw appear again the fighting flush, proof of his hard-fibered nature, ever ready to rejoin with challenge when challenge came.

"Did not Saul fall upon his own sword?" asked John Calhoun. "Have not devoted leaders from the start of the world till now sometimes rid the scene of the responsible figures in lost fights, the men on whom blame rested for failures?"

"Cowards!" rejoined Doctor Ward. "Cowards, every one of them! Were there not other swords upon which they might have fallen—those of their enemies?"

"It is not my own hand—my own sword, Sam," said Calhoun. "Not that. You know as well as I that I am already marked and doomed, even as I sit at my table to-night. A walk of a wet night here in Washington—a turn along the Heights out there when the winter wind is keen—yes, Sam, I see my grave before me, close enough; but how can I rest easy in that grave? Man, we have not yet dreamed how great a country this may be. We *must* have Texas. We *must* have also Oregon. We must have—"

"Free?" The old doctor shrugged his shoulders and smiled at the arch pro-slavery exponent.

"Then, since you mention it, yes!" retorted Calhoun fretfully. "But I shall not go into the old argument of those who say that black is white, that South is North. It is only for my own race that I plan a wider America. But then—" Calhoun raised a long, thin hand. "Why," he went on slowly, "I have just told you that I have failed. And yet you, my old friend, whom I ought to trust, condemn me to live on!"

Doctor Samuel Ward took snuff again, but all the answer he made was to waggle his gray mane and stare hard at the face of the other.

“Yes,” said he, at length, “I condemn you to fight on, John;” and he smiled grimly.

“Why, look at you, man!” he broke out fiercely, after a moment. “The type and picture of combat! Good bone, fine bone and hard; a hard head and bony; little eye, set deep; strong, wiry muscles, not too big—fighting muscles, not dough; clean limbs; strong fingers; good arms, legs, neck; wide chest—”

“Then you give me hope?” Calhoun flashed a smile at him.

“No, sir! If you do your duty, there is no hope for you to live. If you do not do your duty, there is no hope for you to die, John Calhoun, for more than two years to come—perhaps five years—six. Keep up this work—as you must, my friend—and you die as surely as though I shot you through as you sit there. Now, is this any comfort to you?”

A gray pallor overspread my master’s face. That truth is welcome to no man, morbid or sane, sound or ill; but brave men meet it as this one did.

“Time to do much!” he murmured to himself. “Time to mend many broken vessels, in those two years. One more fight—yes, let us have it!”

But Calhoun the man was lost once more in Calhoun the visionary, the fanatic statesman. He summed up, as though to himself, something of the situation which then existed at Washington.

“Yes, the coast is clearer, now that Webster is out of the cabinet, but Mr. Upshur’s death last month brings in new complications. Had he remained our secretary of state, much might have been done. It was only last October he proposed to Texas a treaty of annexation.”

“Yes, and found Texas none so eager,” frowned Doctor Ward.

“No; and why not? You and I know well enough. Sir Richard Pakenham, the English plenipotentiary here, could tell if he liked. *England* is busy with Texas. Texas owes large funds to *England*. *England* wants Texas as a colony.

There is fire under this smoky talk of Texas dividing into two governments, one, at least, under England's gentle and unselfish care!

"And now, look you," Calhoun continued, rising, and pacing up and down, "look what is the evidence. Van Zandt, *chargé d'affaires* in Washington for the Republic of Texas, wrote Secretary Upshur only a month before Upshur's death, and told him to go carefully or he would drive Mexico to resume the war, *and so cost Texas the friendship of England!* Excellent Mr. Van Zandt! I at least know what the friendship of England means. So, he asks us if we will protect Texas with troops and ships in case she *does* sign that agreement of annexation. Cunning Mr. Van Zandt! He knows what that answer must be to-day, with England ready to fight us for Texas and Oregon both, and we wholly unready for war. Cunning Mr. Van Zandt, covert friend of England! And lucky Mr. Upshur, who was killed, and so never had to make that answer!"

"But, John, another will have to make it, the one way or the other," said his friend.

"Yes!" The long hand smote on the table.

"President Tyler has offered you Mr. Upshur's portfolio as secretary of state?"

"Yes!" The long hand smote again.

Doctor Ward made no comment beyond a long whistle, as he recrossed his legs. His eyes were fixed on Calhoun's frowning face. "There will be events!" said he at length, grinning.

"I have not yet accepted," said Calhoun. "If I do, it will be to bring Texas and Oregon into this Union, one slave, the other free, but both vast and of a mighty future for us. That done, I resign at once."

"Will you accept?"

Calhoun's answer was first to pick up a paper from his desk. "See, here is the despatch Mr. Pakenham brought from Lord Aberdeen of the British ministry to Mr. Upshur just two days before his death. Judge whether Aberdeen wants liberty—or territory! In effect he reasserts England's right to interfere in our affairs. We fought one war to disprove that. England has said enough on this continent. And England has meddled enough."

Calhoun and Ward looked at each other, sober in their realization of the grave problems which then beset American statesmanship and American thought. The old doctor was first to break the silence. "Then do you accept? Will you serve again, John?"

"Listen to me. If I do accept, I shall take Mr. Upshur's and Mr. Nelson's place only on one condition—yes, if I do, here is what *I* shall say to England regarding Texas. I shall show her what a Monroe Doctrine is; shall show her that while Texas is small and weak, Texas *and* this republic are not. This is what I have drafted as a possible reply. I shall tell Mr. Pakenham that his chief's avowal of intentions has made it our *imperious duty*, in self-defense, to hasten the annexation of Texas, cost what it may, mean what it may! John Calhoun does not shilly-shally.

"*That* will be my answer," repeated my chief at last. Again they looked gravely, each into the other's eye, each knowing what all this might mean.

"Yes, I shall have Texas, as I shall have Oregon, settled before I lay down my arms, Sam Ward. No, I am *not* yet ready to die!" Calhoun's old fire now flamed in all his mien.

"The situation is extremely difficult," said his friend slowly. "It must be done; but how? We are as a nation not ready for war. You as a statesman are not adequate to the politics of all this. Where is your political party, John? You

have none. You have outrun all parties. It will be your ruin, that you have been honest!"

Calhoun turned on him swiftly. "You know as well as I that mere politics will not serve. It will take some extraordinary measure—you know men—and, perhaps, *women*."

"Yes," said Doctor Ward, "and a precious silly lot: they are; the two running after each other and forgetting each other; using and wasting each other; ruining and despoiling each other, all the years, from Troy to Rome! But yes! For a man, set a woman for a trap. *Vice versa*, I suppose?"

Calhoun nodded, with a thin smile. "As it chances, I need a man. Ergo, and very plainly, I must use a woman!"

They looked at each other for a moment. That Calhoun planned some deep-laid stratagem was plain, but his speech for the time remained enigmatic, even to his most intimate companion.

"There are two women in our world to-day," said Calhoun. "As to Jackson, the old fool was a monogamist, and still is. Not so much so Jim Polk of Tennessee. Never does he appear in public with eyes other than for the Doña Lucrezia of the Mexican legation! Now, one against the other—Mexico against Austria—"

Doctor Ward raised his eyebrows in perplexity.

"That is to say, England, and *not* Austria," went on Calhoun coldly. "The ambassadress of England to America was born in Budapest! So I say, Austria; or perhaps Hungary, or some other country, which raised this strange representative who has made some stir in Washington here these last few weeks."

"Ah, *you mean the baroness!*" exclaimed Doctor Ward. "Tut! Tut!"

Calhoun nodded, with the same cold, thin smile. "Yes," he said, "I mean Mr. Pakenham's reputed mistress, his assured secret agent and spy, the beautiful Baroness von Ritz!"

He mentioned a name then well known in diplomatic and social life, when intrigue in Washington, if not open, was none too well hidden.

"Gay Sir Richard!" he resumed. "You know, his ancestor was a brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington. He himself seems to have absorbed some of the great duke's fondness for the fair. Before he came to us he was with England's legation in Mexico. 'Twas there he first met the Doña Lucrezia. 'Tis said he would have remained in Mexico had it not been arranged that she and her husband, Señor Yturrio, should accompany General Almonte in the Mexican ministry here. On *these* conditions, Sir Richard agreed to accept promotion as minister plenipotentiary to Washington!"

"That was nine years ago," commented Doctor Ward.

"Yes; and it was only last fall that he was made envoy extraordinary. He is at least an extraordinary envoy! Near fifty years of age, he seems to forget public decency; he forgets even the Doña Lucrezia, leaving her to the admiration of Mr. Polk and Mr. Van Zandt, and follows off after the sprightly Baroness von Ritz. Meantime, Señor Yturrio *also* forgets the Doña Lucrezia, and proceeds *also* to follow after the baroness—although with less hope than Sir Richard, as they say! At least Pakenham has taste! The Baroness von Ritz has brains and beauty both. It is *she* who is England's real envoy. Now, I believe she knows England's real intentions as to Texas."

Doctor Ward screwed his lips for a long whistle, as he contemplated John Calhoun's thin, determined face.

"I do not care at present to say more," went on my chief; "but do you not see, granted certain motives, Polk might come into power pledged to the



extension of our Southwest borders—”

“Calhoun, are you mad?” cried his friend. “Would you plunge this country into war? Would you pit two peoples, like cocks on a floor? And would you use women in our diplomacy?”

Calhoun now was no longer the friend, the humanitarian. He was the relentless machine; the idea; the single purpose, which to the world at large he had been all his life in Congress, in cabinets, on this or the other side of the throne of American power. He spoke coldly as he went on:

“In these matters it is not a question of means, but of results. If war comes, let it come; although I hope it will not come. As to the use of women—tell me, *why not women?* Why anything *else* but women? It is only playing life against life; one variant against another. That is politics, my friend. I *want* Pakenham. So, I must learn what *Pakenham* wants! Does he want Texas for England, or the Baroness von Ritz *for himself?*”

Ward still sat and looked at him. “My God!” said he at last, softly; but Calhoun went on:

“Why, who has made the maps of the world, and who has written pages in its history? Who makes and unmakes cities and empires and republics to-day? *Woman*, and not man! Are you so ignorant—and you a physician, who know them both? Gad, man, you do not understand your own profession, and yet you seek to counsel me in mine!”

“Strange words from you, John,” commented his friend, shaking his head; “not seemly for a man who stands where you stand to-day.”

“Strange weapons—yes. If I could always use my old weapons of tongue and brain, I would not need these, perhaps. Now you tell me my time is short. I must fight now to win. I have never fought to lose. I can not be too nice in agents and instruments.”

The old doctor rose and took a turn up and down the little room, one of Calhoun's modest ménage at the nation's capital, which then was not the city it is to-day. Calhoun followed him with even steps.

"Changes of maps, my friend? Listen to me. The geography of America for the next fifty years rests under a little roof over in M Street to-night—a roof which Sir Richard secretly maintains. The map of the United States, I tell you, is covered with a down counterpane *à deux*, to-night. You ask me to go on with my fight. I answer, first I must find the woman. Now, I say, I have found her, as you know. Also, I have told you *where* I have found her. Under a counterpane! Texas, Oregon, these United States under a counterpane!"

Doctor Ward sighed, as he shook his head. "I don't pretend to know now all you mean."

Calhoun whirled on him fiercely, with a vigor which his wasted frame did not indicate as possible.

"Listen, then, and I will tell you what John Calhoun means—John Calhoun, who has loved his own state, who has hated those who hated him, who has never prayed for those who spitefully used him, who has fought and will fight, since all insist on that. It is true Tyler has offered me again to-day the portfolio of secretary of state. Shall I take it? If I do, it means that I am employed by this administration to secure the admission of Texas. Can you believe me when I tell you that my ambition is for it all—*all*, every foot of new land, west to the Pacific, that we can get, slave *or* free? Can you believe John Calhoun, pro-slavery advocate and orator all his life, when he says that he believes he is an humble instrument destined, with God's aid, and through the use of such instruments as our human society affords, to build, *not* a wider slave country, but a wider America?"

"It would be worth the fight of a few years more, Calhoun," gravely answered his old friend. "I admit I had not dreamed this of you."

"History will not write it of me, perhaps," went on my chief. "But you tell me to fight, and now I shall fight, and in my own way. I tell you, that answer shall go to Pakenham. And I tell you, Pakenham shall not *dare* take offense at me. War with Mexico we possibly, indeed certainly, shall have. War on the Northwest, too, we yet may have unless—" He paused; and Doctor Ward prompted him some moments later, as he still remained in thought.

"Unless what, John? What do you mean—still hearing the rustle of skirts?"

"Yes!—unless the celebrated Baroness Helena von Ritz says otherwise!" replied he grimly.

"How dignified a diplomacy have we here! You plan war between two embassies on the distaff side!" smiled Doctor Ward.

Calhoun continued his walk. "I do not say so," he made answer; "but, if there must be war, we may reflect that war is at its best when woman *is* in the field!"

## Two

### *By Special Despatch*



**I**n all eras and all climes a woman of great genius or beauty has done what she chose.—*Ouido*.

“Nicholas,” said Calhoun, turning to me suddenly, but with his invariable kindness of tone, “oblige me to-night. I have written a message here. You will see the address—”

“I have unavoidably heard this lady’s name,” I hesitated.

“You will find the lady’s name above the seal. Take her this message from me. Yes, your errand is to bring the least known and most talked of woman in Washington, alone, unattended save by yourself, to a gentleman’s apartments, to his house, at a time past the hour of midnight! That gentleman is myself! You must not take any answer in the negative.”

As I sat dumbly, holding this sealed document in my hand, he turned to Doctor Ward, with a nod toward myself.

“I choose my young aide, Mr. Trist here, for good reasons. He is just back from six months in the wilderness, and may be shy; but once he had a way with women, so they tell me—and you know, in approaching the question *ad feminam* we operate *per hominem*.”

Doctor Ward took snuff with violence as he regarded me critically.

"I do not doubt the young man's sincerity and faithfulness," said he. "I was only questioning one thing."

"Yes?"

"His age."

Calhoun rubbed his chin. "Nicholas," said he, "you heard me. I have no wish to encumber you with useless instructions. Your errand is before you. Very much depends upon it, as you have heard. All I can say is, keep your head, keep your feet, and keep your heart!"

The two older men both turned now, and smiled at me in a manner not wholly to my liking. Neither was this errand to my liking.

It was true, I was hardly arrived home after many months in the West; but I had certain plans of my own for that very night, and although as yet I had made no definite engagement with my fiancée, Miss Elisabeth Churchill, of Elmhurst Farm, for meeting her at the great ball this night, such certainly was my desire and my intention. Why, I had scarce seen Elisabeth twice in the last year.

"How now, Nick, my son?" began my chief. "Have staff and scrip been your portion so long that you are wholly wedded to them? Come, I think the night might promise you something of interest. I assure you of one thing—you will receive no willing answer from the fair baroness. She will scoff at you, and perhaps bid you farewell. See to it, then; do what you like, but bring her *with* you, and bring her *here*."

"You will realize the importance of all this when I tell you that my answer to Mr. Tyler must be in before noon to-morrow. That answer will depend upon the answer the Baroness von Ritz makes to *me*, here, to-night! I can not go to her, so she must come to me. You have often served me well, my son."

Serve me to-night. My time is short; I have no moves to lose. It is you who will decide before morning whether or not John Calhoun is the next secretary of state. And that will decide whether or not Texas is to be a state." I had never seen Mr. Calhoun so intent, so absorbed.

We all three now sat silent in the little room where the candles guttered in the great glass *cylindres* on the mantel—an apartment scarce better lighted by the further aid of lamps fed by oil.

"He might be older," said Calhoun at length, speaking of me as though I were not present. "And 'tis a hard game to play, if once my lady Helena takes it into her merry head to make it so for him. But if I sent one shorter of stature and uglier of visage and with less art in approaching a crinoline—why, perhaps he would get no farther than her door. No; he will serve—he *must* serve!"

He arose now, and bowed to us both, even as I rose and turned for my cloak to shield me from the raw drizzle which then was falling in the streets. Doctor Ward reached down his own shaggy top hat from the rack.

"To bed with you now, John," said he sternly.

"No, I must write."

"You heard me say, to bed with you! A stiff toddy to make you sleep. Nicholas here may wake you soon enough with his mysterious companion. I think to-morrow will be time enough for you to work, and to-morrow very likely will bring work for you to do."

Calhoun sighed. "God!" he exclaimed, "if I but had back my strength! If there were more than those scant remaining years!"

"Go!" said he suddenly; and so we others passed down his step and out into the semi-lighted streets.

So this, then, was my errand. My mind still tingled at its unwelcome quality. Doctor Ward guessed something of my mental dissatisfaction.

“Never mind, Nicholas,” said he, as we parted at the street corner, where he climbed into the rickety carriage which his colored driver held awaiting him. “Never mind. I don’t myself quite know what Calhoun wants; but he would not ask of you anything personally improper. Do his errand, then. It is part of your work. In any case—” and I thought I saw him grin in the dim light—“you may have a night which you will remember.”

There proved to be truth in what he said.

## Three

### *In Argument*



**T**he egotism of women is always for two.—*Mme. De Stäel.*

The thought of missing my meeting with Elisabeth still rankled in my soul. Had it been another man who asked me to carry this message, I must have refused. But this man was my master, my chief, in whose service I had engaged.

Strange enough it may seem to give John Calhoun any title showing love or respect. To-day most men call him traitor—call him the man responsible for the war between North and South—call him the arch apostle of that impossible doctrine of slavery, which we all now admit was wrong. Why, then, should I love him as I did? I can not say, except that I always loved, honored and admired courage, uprightness, integrity.

For myself, his agent, I had, as I say, left the old Trist homestead at the foot of South Mountain in Maryland, to seek my fortune in our capital city. I had had some three or four years' semi-diplomatic training when I first met Calhoun and entered his service as assistant. It was under him that I finished my studies in law. Meantime, I was his messenger in very many quests, his



source of information in many matters where he had no time to go into details.

Strange enough had been some of the circumstances in which I found myself thrust through this relation with a man so intimately connected for a generation with our public life. Adventures were always to my liking, and surely I had my share. I knew the frontier marches of Tennessee and Alabama, the intricacies of politics of Ohio and New York, mixed as those things were in Tyler's time. I had even been as far west as the Rockies, of which young Frémont was now beginning to write so understandingly. For six months I had been in Mississippi and Texas studying matters and men, and now, just hack from Natchitoches, I felt that I had earned some little rest.

But there was the fascination of it—that big game of politics. No, I will call it by its better name of statesmanship, which sometimes it deserved in those days, as it does not to-day. That was a day of Warwicks. The nominal rulers did not hold the greatest titles. Naturally, I knew something of these things, from the nature of my work in Calhoun's office. I have had insight into documents which never became public. I have seen treaties made. I have seen the making of maps go forward. This, indeed, I was in part to see that very night, and curiously, too.

How the Baroness von Ritz—beautiful adventuress as she was sometimes credited with being, charming woman as she was elsewhere described, fascinating and in some part dangerous to any man, as all admitted—could care to be concerned with this purely political question of our possible territories, I was not shrewd enough at that moment in advance to guess; for I had nothing more certain than the rumor she was England's spy. I bided my time, knowing that ere long the knowledge must come to me in Calhoun's office even in case I did not first learn more than Calhoun himself.

Vaguely in my conscience I felt that, after all, my errand was justified, even though at some cost to my own wishes and my own pride. The farther I walked in the dark along Pennsylvania Avenue, into which finally I swung after I had crossed Rock Bridge, the more I realized that perhaps this big game was worth playing in detail and without quibble as the master mind should dictate. As he was servant of a purpose, of an ideal of triumphant democracy, why should not I also serve in a cause so splendid?

I was, indeed, young—Nicholas Trist, of Maryland; six feet tall, thin, lean, always hungry, perhaps a trifle freckled, a little sandy of hair, blue I suppose of eye, although I am not sure; good rider and good marcher, I know; something of an expert with the weapons of my time and people; fond of a horse and a dog and a rifle—yes, and a glass and a girl, if truth be told. I was not yet thirty, in spite of my western travels. At that age the rustle of silk or dimity, the suspicion of adventure, tempts the worst or the best of us, I fear. Woman!—the very sound of the word made my blood leap then. I went forward rather blithely, as I now blush to confess. “If there are maps to be made to-night,” said I, “the Baroness Helena shall do her share in writing on my chief’s old mahogany desk, and not on her own dressing case.”

That was an idle boast, though made but to myself. I had not yet met the woman.

## Four

### *The Baroness Helena*



**W**oman is seldom merciful to the man who is timid. —*Edward Bulwer Lytton.*

There was one of our dim street lights at a central corner on old Pennsylvania Avenue, and under it, after a long walk, I paused for a glance at the inscription on my sealed document. I had not looked at it before in the confusion of my somewhat hurried mental processes. In addition to the name and street number, in Calhoun's writing, I read this memorandum: "Knock at the third door in the second block beyond M Street"

I recalled the nearest cross street; but I must confess the direction still seemed somewhat cryptic. Puzzled, I stood under the lamp, shielding the face of the note under my cloak to keep off the rain, as I studied it.

The sound of wheels behind me on the muddy pavement called my attention, and I looked about. A carriage came swinging up to the curb where I stood. It was driven rapidly, and as it approached the door swung open. I heard a quick word, and the driver pulled up his horses. I saw the light shine through the door on a glimpse of white satin. I looked again. Yes, it was a beckoning hand! The negro driver looked at me inquiringly.

Ah, well, I suppose diplomacy under the stars runs much the same in all ages. I have said that I loved Elisabeth, but also said I was not yet thirty. Moreover, I was a gentleman, and here might be a lady in need of help. I need not say that in a moment I was at the side of the carriage. Its occupant made no exclamation of surprise; in fact, she moved back upon the other side of the seat in the darkness, as though to make room for me!

I was absorbed in a personal puzzle. Here was I, messenger upon some important errand, as I might guess. But white satin and a midnight adventure—at least, a gentleman might bow and ask if he could be of assistance!

A dark framed face, whose outlines I could only dimly see in the faint light of the street lamp, leaned toward me. The same small hand nervously reached out, as though in request.

I now very naturally stepped closer. A pair of wide and very dark eyes was looking into mine. I could now see her face. There was no smile upon her lips. I had never seen her before, that was sure—nor did I ever think to see her like again; I could say that even then, even in the half light. Just a trifle foreign, the face; somewhat dark, but not too dark; the lips full, the eyes luminous, the forehead beautifully arched, chin and cheek beautifully rounded, nose clean-cut and straight, thin but not pinched. There was nothing niggard about her. She was magnificent—a magnificent woman. I saw that she had splendid jewels at her throat, in her ears—a necklace of diamonds, long hoops of diamonds and emeralds used as ear-rings; a sparkling clasp which caught at her white throat the wrap which she had thrown about her ball gown—for now I saw she was in full evening dress. I guessed she had been an attendant at the great ball, that ball which I had missed with so keen a regret myself—the ball where I had hoped to dance with Elisabeth. Without doubt she had lost her way and was asking the first stranger for instructions to her driver.

My lady, whoever she was, seemed pleased with her rapid temporary scrutiny. With a faint murmur, whether of invitation or not I scarce could tell, she drew back again to the farther side of the seat. Before I knew how or why, I was at her side. The driver pushed shut the door, and whipped up his team.

Personally I am gifted with but small imagination. In a very matter of fact way I had got into this carriage with a strange lady. Now in a sober and matter of fact way it appeared to me my duty to find out the reason for this singular situation.

“Madam,” I remarked to my companion, “in what manner can I be of service to you this evening?”

I made no attempt to explain who I was, or to ask who or what she herself was, for I had no doubt that our interview soon would be terminated.

“I am fortunate that you are a gentleman,” she said, in a low and soft voice, quite distinct, quite musical in quality, and marked with just the faintest trace of some foreign accent, although her English was perfect.

I looked again at her. Yes, her hair was dark; that was sure. It swept up in a great roll above her oval brow. Her eyes, too, must be dark, I confirmed. Yes—as a passed lamp gave me aid—there were strong dark brows above them. Her nose, too, was patrician; her chin curving just strongly enough, but not too full, and faintly cleft, a sign of power, they say.

A third gracious lamp gave me a glimpse of her figure, huddled back among her draperies, and I guessed her to be about of medium height. A fourth lamp showed me her hands, small, firm, white; also I could catch a glimpse of her arm, as it lay outstretched, her fingers clasping a fan. So I knew her arms were round and taper, hence all her limbs and figure finely molded, because nature does not do such things by halves, and makes no bumbles in her

symmetry of contour when she plans a noble specimen of humanity. Here *was* a noble specimen of what woman may be.

On the whole, as I must confess, I sighed rather comfortably at the fifth street lamp; for, if my chief must intrust to me adventures of a dark night—adventures leading to closed carriages and strange companions—I had far liefer it should be some such woman as this. I was not in such a hurry to ask again how I might be of service. In fact, being somewhat surprised and somewhat pleased, I remained silent now for a time, and let matters adjust themselves; which is not a bad course for any one similarly engaged.

She turned toward me at last, deliberately, her fan against her lips, studying me. And I did as much, taking such advantage as I could of the passing street lamps. Then, all at once, without warning or apology, she smiled, showing very even and white teeth.

She smiled. There came to me from the purple-colored shadows some sort of deep perfume, strange to me. I frown at the description of such things and such emotions, but I swear that as I sat there, a stranger, not four minutes in companionship with this other stranger, I felt swim up around me some sort of amber shadow, edged with purple—the shadow, as I figured it then, being this perfume, curious and alluring!

It was wet, there in the street. Why should I rebel at this stealing charm of color or fragrance—let those name it better who can. At least I sat, smiling to myself in my purple-amber shadow, now in no very special hurry. And now again she smiled, thoughtfully, rather approving my own silence, as I guessed; perhaps because it showed no unmanly perturbation—my lack of imagination passing for aplomb.

At last I could not, in politeness, keep this up further.

*“How may I serve the Baroness?”* said I.