F. MARION CRAWFORD

TO LEEWARD

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To Leeward

EAN 8596547348474

DigiCat, 2022
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THE LAST RAYS OF THE SUN SHONE HORIZONTALLY ACROSS THE TERRACE.

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TO LEEWARD.

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CHAPTER I.

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There are two Romes. There is the Rome of the intelligent foreigner, consisting of excavations, monuments, tramways, hotels, typhoid fever, incense, and wax candles; and there is the Rome within, a city of antique customs, good and bad, a town full of aristocratic prejudices, of intrigues, of religion, of old-fashioned honour and new-fashioned scandal, of happiness and unhappiness, of just people and unjust. Besides all this, there is a very modern court and a government of the future, which may almost be said to make up together a third city.

Moreover, these several coexistent cities, and their corresponding inhabitants, are subdivided to an infinity of gradations, in order to contain all and make room for all. The foreigner who hunts excavations does not cross the path of the foreigner who sniffs after incense, any more than the primeval aristocrat sits down to dinner with the representative of fashionable scandal; any more than the just man would ever allow the unjust to be introduced to him. They all enjoy so thoroughly the freedom to ignore each other that they would not for worlds endanger the safety of the barrier that separates them. Of course, as they all say, this state of things cannot last. There must ultimately be an amalgamation, a deluge, a unity, fraternity and equality; a state of things in which we shall say, "Sois mon frère, ou je te tue,"—a future glorious, disgusting, or dull, according as you look at it. But, meanwhile, it is all

very charming, and there is plenty for every one to enjoy, and an abundance for every one to abuse.

When Marcantonio Carantoni saw his sister married to a Frenchman, he was exceedingly glad that she had not married an Englishman, a Turk, a Jew, or an infidel. The Vicomte de Charleroi was, and is, a gentleman; rather easy-going, perhaps, and inclined to look upon republics in general, and the French republic in particular, with the lenient eye of the man who owns land and desires peace first—and a monarchy afterwards, whenever convenient. But in these days it is not altogether worthy of blame that a man should look after his worldly interests and goods; for how else can the aristocracy expect to make any headway against the stream of grimy bourgeois, who sell everything at a profit, while the nobles buy everything at a loss? So Marcantonio is satisfied with his brother-in-law, and just now is particularly delighted because Charleroi has got himself appointed to a post in Rome; and he goes to see his sister every day, for he is very fond of her.

In truth, it is not surprising that Marcantonio should like his sister, for she is a very charming woman. She is beautiful, too, in a grand way, with her auburn hair, and grey eyes, and fair skin; but no one can help feeling that she might be quite as beautiful, and yet be anything but charming; so many beautiful people are vain, or shy, or utterly idiotic. Madame de Charleroi is something of a paragon, and has as many enemies as most paragons have, but they can find nothing to feed their envy. She was very unhappy years ago, but time has closed the wounds, or has hidden them from sight, and her dearest friends can only

say that she was cold and showed very little heart. When the world says that a woman is a piece of ice, you may generally be sure that she is both beautiful and good, so that it can find nothing worse to say. Marcantonio Carantoni's sister is a paragon, and there are only two things to be said against her,—she did not marry Charleroi for love, and she has not done half the things in the world that she might have done.

On the January afternoon which marks the opening of this story, the brother and sister sat together in a small boudoir in the Carantoni palace; there was room for all in the great house, and as Marcantonio was not married, it was natural that his sister and her husband, with their children, governesses, servants, and horses should occupy the untenanted part of the ancestral mansion. Up in the second story there is a room such as you would not expect to find within those grey and ancient walls, where the lower windows are heavily grated, and huge stone coats of arms frown forbiddingly from above. It is a room all sun and flowers and modern furniture, though not of the more hideous type of newness,—modern in the sense of comfortable, well padded and well aired. The afternoon sun was pouring in through the closed windows, and there was a small wood fire in the narrow fireplace. The Vicomtesse de Charleroi sat warming her toes, and her brother was rolling a cigarette as he looked at her. A short silence had succeeded a somewhat animated discussion. She looked at the fire, and he looked at her.

"My dear Diana," said Marcantonio at last, rising to get himself a match, "what in the world can you have against

her? We are not Hindoos, you know, to talk about caste in these days; and even if that were the objection, she comes of very proper people, I am sure, though they are foreigners."

Madame moved her feet impatiently.

"Oh, you know it is not that!" she said petulantly. "As if I had not married a foreigner myself! But then, if you had felt about it as I feel about this, I would have thought twice"—

"Have I not thought twice—and three times?"

"Of course, yes—while your head is hot with this fancy. Yes, you have probably thought a hundred times, at least, this very day. Listen to me, my dear boy, and do what I tell you. Go away to Paris, or London, or Vienna, for a fortnight, and then come back and tell me what you think about it. Will you not do that—to please me?"

"But why?" objected Marcantonio, looking very uncomfortable, for he hated to refuse his sister anything. "Seriously, why should I not marry her? Is there anything against her? If there is, tell me."

Donna Diana rose rather wearily and went to the window.

"I wish you would abandon the whole idea," she said. "I am quite sure you will repent when it is too late. I do not believe in these young girls who occupy themselves with philosophy and the good of the human race. Politics—well, we all have a finger in politics; but this dreadful progressive thought—it is turning the world upside down."

"Oh—it is the philosophy that you do not like about her? Well, my dear sister, that is exactly what I think so interesting. This young English Hypatia"—

"Hypatia, indeed!" cried Donna Diana rather scornfully.

"Yes. Is she not learned?"

"Perhaps."

"And beautiful?"

"No,—certainly not. She is simply a little pretty."

Marcantonio shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course," he said, "you will not allow it." His sister looked round quickly.

"That is rude," she said. In a moment her brother was by her side.

"Forgive me, Diana mia; you know I did not mean it. But you see I think she is beautiful, and that is everything, after all."

"Yes," answered she, "I suppose it is everything, now. But philosophy is not everything. Put her out of your head, dear boy, and do not say any more rude things."

Marcantonio had the power to avoid being rude, but he was not able to follow the other piece of advice. He could not put her out of his head. On the contrary, he went out and shut himself up in his own rooms and thought of her for a whole hour.

He was not at all like his sister in appearance, though he resembled her somewhat in character. He was of middle height, sparely built, dark of skin, and aquiline of feature; neither handsome nor ugly, but very decidedly refined,—gentle of speech and kind of face. Without any more vanity than most people, he was yet always a little more carefully dressed than other men, and consequently passed for a dandy. Altogether, he was a pleasant person to look at, but not especially remarkable at first sight.

As regards his position, he bore an ancient name, dignified with the title of marquis; he was an only son, and his parents were dead; he owned the fine old palace in Rome and a good deal of land elsewhere; he never gambled, and was generally considered to be rich, as fortunes go in modern Italy. Of course, he was a good match, and many were the hints he received, from time to time, to the effect that he would be very acceptable as a son-in-law. Nevertheless he was not married, and he did not particularly care for the society of women. In truth, women did not find him very amenable, for he would not marry, and could not play adoration well enough to please them. So they left him alone. Grave old gentlemen nodded approvingly when they spoke of him, and his uncle the cardinal regarded him as one of the mainstays of the clerical party. As a matter of fact, he did not aspire to anything of the kind, and was merely a very honest young nobleman of good education, who had not made for himself any interest in life, but who nevertheless found life very agreeable. Possessing many good qualities, he yet knew very well that he had never been put to the test, nor required to show much strength of character; and he did not wish to be put into any such position. His sister was very fond of him, but she sometimes caught herself wishing he would do something a little out of the everlasting common round of social respectability. He was twenty-nine years old, and she was a year younger.

Of late, however, it had become apparent that Marcantonio, Marchese Carantoni, had not only found an interest in life, but had also discovered in himself the

strength of will necessary to its prosecution. The dull regularity of his existence was shaken to its foundations, and out of the vast social sea a figure had risen which was destined to destroy the old order of things with him, and to create a new one. There was no doubt about it; not so much because he himself said so, as because his whole manner and being proclaimed the fact. He was seriously in love. Worse than that, he was in love with a lady of whom his sister did not approve, and he evidently meant to marry, whether she liked it or not.

He was seriously in love; and, indeed, love ought always to be a serious thing, or else it should be called by another name. There is a great deal of very poor nonsense talked and written about love by persons only vicariously acquainted with it; and it is a great pity, because there is absolutely no subject so permanently interesting to humanity as love, whether in life or in fiction. And there is no subject which deserves more tenderness and delicacy, or which requires more strength in the handling.

The relation of brother and sister is unlike any other. It represents the only possible absolutely permanent and platonic affection between young men and young women. Its foundation is in identity of blood instead of in the spontaneous sympathy of the heart, and even when brother and sister quarrel they understand each other. Lovers frequently do not understand each other when they are on the best of terms, and the small difference of opinion grows by that misunderstanding until it makes an impassable gulf. Brothers and sisters may be estranged, separated, divided by family quarrels or by the bloody exigencies of civil war,

but if once they are thrown together again the mysterious attraction of consanguinity shows itself, and their life begins again where it had been broken off by untoward fate.

Madame de Charleroi was inclined to be angry with Marcantonio, and when he was gone she sat by the fire, wondering what he would be like when he should be married. Somehow she had never thought of him as married, certainly not as married to a pernicious young English girl, with all sorts of queer ideas in her brain, and a tendency to sympathise with the dynamite party. He might surely have chosen better than that. Donna Diana was not a woman of narrow prejudices, but she really could not be expected to be pleased at seeing her brother, a Catholic gentleman, bent on uniting himself to a foreign girl with no fortune, no beauty—well, not much—and a taste for explosives. He might surely have chosen better.

Donna Diana thought of her father, and fancied what he would have said to such a match, the strict old nobleman. And so, between her thoughts and her memories the afternoon wore on, and she bethought herself that it was time to go out.

The horses spun along the streets through the crisp golden air, and now and then a ray of the lowering sun caught them as they dashed through some open place on the way, making them look like burnished metal. And the light touched Madame de Charleroi's beautiful face and auburn hair, so that the people stood still to look at her as she passed,—for every Roman knew Donna Diana Carantoni by sight, just as every Roman knows every other Roman, man, woman and child, distinguishing lovingly between the

Romans of Rome and the Romans of the north. By and by the carriage rolled through the iron gates of the Pincio, and along the drive to the open terrace where the band plays, till it stood still behind the row of stone posts, within hearing of the music. The place has been absolutely described to death, and everybody knows exactly how it looks. There are flowers, and a band-stand, and babies, and a view of St. Peter's.

The first person Donna Diana saw was her brother, standing disconsolately by one of the short pillars and looking at each carriage as it drove up. He was evidently waiting for some one who did not come. His black moustache drooped sadly, and his face was so melancholy that his sister smiled as she watched him.

Marcantonio was soon aware of her presence, but he had no intention of showing it, and studiously kept his head turned towards the drive, watching the line of carriages. Madame de Charleroi was quickly surrounded by a crowd of men, all dressed precisely alike, and all anxious to say something that might attract the attention of the famous beauty. Presently they bored her, and her carriage moved on; whereupon they pulled their hats off and began to chatter scandal amongst themselves, after the manner of their kind. They nodded to Marcantonio as they passed him in a body, and he was left alone. The sun was setting, and there was a purple light over the flats behind the Vatican, recently flooded by a rise in the Tiber. There was no longer any object in waiting, and the young man sauntered slowly down the steps and the steep drive to the Piazza del Popolo, and entered the Corso.

To tell the truth, he was disappointed, bored, annoyed, and angry, all at once. He had fully expected to see her, and to find consolation in some sweet words for the hard things his sister had said to him. Perhaps also he had enjoyed the prospect of exhibiting himself to his sister in the society of the lady in question,—for Marcantonio was obstinate, and had just discovered the fact, so that he was anxious to show it. Men who are new in fighting are sure to press every advantage, not having yet learned their strength; but in the course of time they become more generous. Marcantonio was therefore grievously chagrined at being cheated of his small demonstration of independence, besides being a little wounded in his pride, and honestly disappointed at not meeting the young lady he meant to marry. In this state of mind he strolled down the Corso, looked up at her windows, passed and repassed before the house, and ultimately inquired of the confidential porter, who knew him, whether she were at home. The porter said he had not seen the signorina, but that one of the servants had told him she was indisposed. The marchese bit his black moustache and went away in a sad mood.

CHAPTER II.

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Miss Leonora Carnethy was suffering from an acute attack of philosophical despair, which accounted for her not appearing with her mother on the Pincio.

The immediate cause of the fit was the young lady's inability to comprehend Hegel's statement that "Nothing is the same as Being;" and as it was not only necessary to understand it, but also, in Miss Carnethy's view, to reconcile it with some dozens of other philosophical propositions all diametrically opposed to it and to each other, the consequence of the attempt was the most chaotic and hopeless failure on record in the annals of thought. Under these circumstances, Miss Carnethy shut herself up in a dark room, went to bed, and agreed with Hegel that Nothing was precisely the same as Being. She thus scattered all the other philosophies to the angry airts of heaven at one fell sweep, and she felt sure she was going to be a Hindoo.

This sounds a little vague, but nothing could be vaguer than Miss Carnethy's state of mind. Having agreed with Mr. Herbert Spencer that the grand main-spring of life is the pursuit of happiness, and that no other motive has any real influence in human affairs, it was a little hard to find that there was nothing in anything, after all. But then, since her own being was also nothing, why should she trouble herself? Evidently it was impossible for nothing to trouble itself, and so the only possible peace must lie in realising her own nothingness, which could be best accomplished by going to

bed in a dark room. It was very dreary, of course, but she felt it was good logic, and must tell in the long run.

It had happened before. There had been days when she had reached the same point by a different road, and had been satisfactorily roused by a flash of intelligence shedding enough light in her darkened course to give her a new direction. To-day, however, it was quite different. She had certainly now reached the absolute end of all speculation, for she was convinced of the general nothingness of all created strength and life.

"For," said she, "I am quite sure that if I saw a train coming down upon me now, I would not get out of the way, —unless, the train being nothing, and I also nothing, two nothings should make something. But Hegel does not say that, and of course he knew, or he would not have understood that Nothing is the same as Being."

This kind of argument is irreproachable. It is like the old lady who said she was so glad that she did not like spinach, because if she did she would eat it, and, as she detested it, that would be very unpleasant. There is no answer possible to a properly grounded philosophical argument of this kind. On the whole, Miss Carnethy did the right thing when she tried to realise the physical being of nothing.

This Leonora was no ordinary girl. She belonged to a small class of young women who take a certain delight in being different from "the rest"—higher, of course. She had the misfortune to be of a mixed race, so far as blood was concerned, for her father was English and her mother was a Russian. It would probably be hard to find people more utterly unlike than these two, for the beef-eating conqueror

is one, and the fire-eating Tartar is quite another, while this unlucky child of an international parentage had something of each. Her history—she was twenty-two years of age, then—might be summed up in a very few words. An English child, an Italian girl, a Russian woman. Her father had many prejudices, and did not believe in much; her mother had no prejudices at all, and believed in everything under the sun, and in a few things besides, so that certain evilly disposed persons had even said of her that she was superstitious.

There is something infinitely pathetic about such a growing to maturity as had made Leonora Carnethy what she was. Imagine such an anomaly as a poor little seed, of which no one can say whether it is a rose or a nightshade, alternately treated as a fair blossom and as a poisonous weed. Imagine a young girl, full of a certain fierce courage and impatience of restraint, chafing under the moral flat iron of a hopelessly proper father, whose mind is of the great levelling type and his prejudices as mountains of stone in the midst, reared to heaven like pyramids to impose a personal moral geography on the human landscape; and imagine the same girl further possessed of certain truly British instincts of continuity and unreasonable perseverance, eternally offending by her persistence a mother whose strong point is a kind of gymnastic superstition, a strange perversity of exuberant belief, forcing itself into the place of principle where there is none,—imagine a young girl in such a situation, in such a childhood, and it will not seem strange that she should grow up to be a very odd woman.

The father and mother understood each other after a fashion, but neither of them ever understood Leonora, and so Leonora tried to understand herself. To this laudable end she devoured books and ideas of all sorts and kinds, not always perceiving whether she took the poison first and the antidote afterwards, or the contrary, or even whether she fed entirely on poisons or entirely on antidotes. Poor child! she found truth very hard to define, and the criticism exercised by pure reason a very insufficient weapon. Moreover, like Job of old, she had friends and comforters to help in making life hideous. She wondered to-day, as she lay in her darkened room, whether any of them would come, and the thought was unpleasant.

She had just made up her mind to ring the bell and tell her maid that no one should be admitted, when the door opened after the least possible apology for a knock, and she realised that she had thought of the contingency too late.

"Dear Leonora!"

"Dearest Leonora!"

The room was so dark that the young ladies stood still at the door, as they fired off the first shots of their brimming affection. Leonora moved so as to see their dark figures against the light.

"Oh," she said, "is it you?"

She was not glad to see her dear friends, for her fits of philosophical despair were real while they lasted, and she hated to be disturbed in them. But as these two young women were her companions in the study of universal hollowness, she felt that she must bear with them. So, after

a little hesitation she allowed them to let some light into the room, and they sat down and held her hands.

"We want to talk to you about Infinite Time!"

"And Infinite Space!"

"I am persuaded," said the first young lady, "that our ideas of Time are quite mistaken. This system of hours and minutes is not adapted to the larger view."

"No," said Leonora, "for Time is evidently a portion of universal pure Being, and is therefore Nothing. I am sure of it."

"No. Time is not Nothing,—it is Colour."

"How do you mean, dear?" asked Leonora in some surprise.

"I do not quite know, dearest, but I am sure it must be. It is quite certain that Colour is a fundamental conception."

"Of course." There was a pause. Apparently the identity of Infinite Time with Colour did not interest Miss Carnethy, who stared at the light through the blinds between her two friends.

"It seems to me that we girls have no field nowadays," said she, rather irrelevantly.

"An infinite field, dear."

"And infinite time, dearest."

"I would give anything I possess to be able to do anything for anybody," began Leonora. "We know so much about life in theory, and we know nothing about it in practice. I wish mamma would even let me order the dinner sometimes; it would be something. But of course it is all an illusion, and nothing, and very infinite."

Poor Miss Carnethy turned on her pillow with a dreary look in her eyes.

"It will be different when you are married, dear," suggested one.

"Of course," acquiesced the other.

"But can you not see," objected Miss Carnethy, "that we shall never marry men whose ideas are so high and beautiful as ours? And then, to be tied forever to some miserable creature! Fancy not being understood! What do these wretched society men care about the really great questions of life?"

"About Time—"

"And Infinite Space—"

"Nothing, nothing, nothing!" cried Miss Carnethy in real distress.

"And yet it would be dreadful to be an old maid"—

"Perfectly dreadful, of course!" exclaimed all three, in a breath. Then there was a short silence, during which Leonora moved uneasily, and finally sat up, her heavy red hair falling all about her.

"By the bye," she said at last, "have you been out to-day, dears? What have you been doing? Tell me all about it."

"We have been to Lady Smyth-Tompkins's tea. It was very empty."

"You mean very hollow, for there were many people there."

"Yes," said the other, "it was very hollow—empty—everything of that sort. Then we went to drive on the Pincio."

"So very void."

"Yes. We saw Carantoni leaning against a post. I am sure he was thinking of nothing. He looks just like a stuffed glove, —such an inane dandy!"

Miss Carnethy's blue eyes suddenly looked as though they were conscious of something more than mere emptiness in the world. Her strong, well-shaped red lips set themselves like a bent bow, and the shaft was not long in flying.

"He is very pleasant to talk to," said she, "and besides—he really dances beautifully." It was probably a standing grievance with her two friends that Marcantonio did not dance with them, or Leonora could scarcely have produced such an impression in so few words.

"What does he talk about?" asked one, with an affectation of indifference.

"Oh, all sorts of things," answered Leonora. "He does not believe at all in the greatest good of the greatest number. He says he has discovered the Spencerian fallacy, as he calls it."

"Alas, then that also is nothing!"

"Absolutely nothing, dear," continued Leonora. "He says that, if there is no morality beyond happiness"—

"Of course!"

—"then every individual has as much right to be happy as the whole human race put together, since he is under no moral obligation to anybody or anything, there being no abstract morality. Do you see? It is very pretty. And then he says it follows that there is no absolute good unless from a divine standard, which of course is pure nonsense, or ought to be, if Hegel is right."

"Dear me! Of course it is!"

"And so, dears," concluded Leonora triumphantly, "we are all going to the Devil do you see?" The association of ideas seemed exhilarating to Miss Carnethy, and in truth the conclusion was probably suggested more by her feelings than by her logic, if she really possessed any. She felt better, and would put off the further consideration of Nothing and Being to some more convenient season. She therefore gave her friends some tea in her bedroom, and the conversation became more and more earthly, and the subjects more and more minute, until they seemed to be thoroughly within the grasp of the three young ladies.

At last they went, these two charming damsels, very much impressed with Leonora's cleverness, and very much interested in her future,—which she would only refer to in the vaguest terms possible. They were both extremely fashionable young persons, possessed of dowries, good looks, and various other charms, such as good birth, good manners, and the like; and it would be futile to deny that they took a lively interest in the doings of their world, however hollow and vain the cake appeared to them between two bites.

"Are you going to-night, Leonora dear?" they inquired as they left her.

"Of course," answered Miss Carnethy. "I must hear the rest of the 'Spencerian fallacy' you know!"

When Leonora was alone she had a great many things to think of.

The atmosphere had cleared during the last hour, so far as philosophy was concerned, and as she looked at herself

in the glass, she was wondering how she should look in the evening. Not vainly,—at least, not so vainly as most girls with her advantages might have thought,—but reflectively, the English side of her twofold nature having gained the upper hand. For as she gazed into her own blue eyes, trying to search and fathom her own soul, she was conscious of something that gave her pleasure and hope,—something which she had treated scornfully enough in her thoughts that very afternoon.

She knew, for her mother had told her, that Marcantonio Carantoni had written to her parents, had called, had an interview, and had been told that he should be an acceptable son-in-law, provided that he could obtain Leonora's consent. She knew also that in the natural course of things he would this very evening ask her to be his wife; and, lastly, she knew very well that she would accept him.

She wondered vaguely how all those strange unsettled ideas of hers would harmonise in a married life. How far should she and her husband ever agree? She had a photograph of him in her desk, which he had given to her mother, and which she had naturally stolen and hidden away. Now she took it out and brought it to the window, and looked at it minutely, wonderingly, as she had looked at herself in the mirror a moment earlier.

Yes, he was a proper husband enough, with his bright honest eyes and his brave aristocratic nose and black moustache. Not very intelligent, perhaps, by the higher standard,—that everlasting "higher standard" again,—but withal goodly and noble as a lover should be. A lover? What weal and woe of heart-stirring romance that word used to

suggest! And so this was her lover, the one man of all others dreamed of as a future divinity throughout her passionate girlhood. A creature of sighs and stolen glances —ay, perhaps of stolen kisses—a lover should be; breathing soft things and glancing hot glances. Was Marcantonio really her lover?

He was so honest—and so rich! He could hardly want her for her dower's sake,—no, she knew that was impossible. For her beauty's sake, then? No, she was not so beautiful as that, and never could be, though the fashion had changed and red hair was in vogue. A pretty conceit, that mankind should make one half of creation fashionable at the expense of the other! But it is so all the same, and always will be. However, even with red hair, and an immense quantity of it, she was not a great beauty.

Perhaps Marcantonio would have married a great beauty if he could have met one who would accept him. It would not be nice, she thought, to marry a man who could not have the best if he chose. To think that he might ever look back and wish she were as beautiful as some one else! But after much earnest consideration of the matter no image of "some one else" rose to her mind, and she confessed with some triumph that she was not jealous of any one; that he had chosen her for herself, and that she was without rival so far as he was concerned. Not even her friends, the one dark and classic, the other fair and dreamy, could boast of having roused his interest. That was a great advantage.

But did she care for him—did she love him? Of course; how else should it be possible for her, with her high ideas of

man's goodness, to think of ever consenting to marry him? Of course she loved him.

It was not exactly the kind of thing she expected, when she used to think of love a year ago; when love was a detached ideal with wings and arrows, and all manner of romantic and mythical attributes. But considering how very hollow and barren she had demonstrated the world to be, this thing had a certain life about it. It was a real sensation, beyond a doubt, and not an unhappy one either.

The room grew dark and she sat a few moments, the photograph lying idly in her hand. Out of the dusk, coming from the fairyland of her girl's fancy, rose a figure, the figure of the ideal lover she used to evoke before she knew Marcantonio Carantoni. He was a different sort of person altogether, much taller and broader and fiercer; a very impossibility of a man, coming towards her, and upsetting everything in his course; trampling rough-shod over the mangled fragments of her former idols, over society, over Marcantonio, over everything till he was close and near her, touching her hand, touching her lips, clasping her to him in fierce triumph, and bearing her away in a whirlwind of strength. A quick sigh, and she let the photograph fall to the ground, sinking back in her chair with a light in her eyes that overcame the darkness.

Dreamland, dreamland, what fools you make of us all! What strange characters there are among the slides of your theatre, only awaiting the nod of Sleep, the manager, to issue forth, and rant and rave, make love and mischief, do battle and murder, play the scoundrel and the hero, till our

poor brains reel and the daylight is turned on again, and all the players vanish into the thinnest of thin air!

Miss Carnethy rang for her maid, who brought lights and closed the shutters and let down the curtains preparatory to dressing her mistress for dinner. Leonora looked down and saw Marcantonio's photograph lying where it had fallen. She picked it up and looked at it once more by the candle light.

"Perhaps I shall refuse him after all," she thought, coldly enough, and she put it back into the drawer of her desk.

Perhaps you are right, Miss Carnethy, and the world is stuffed with sawdust.

CHAPTER III.

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The soft thick air of the ball-room swayed rhythmically to the swell and fall of the violins; the perfume of roses and lilies was whirled into waves of sweetness, and the beating of many young hearts seemed to tremble musically through the nameless harmony of instrument and voice, and rustling silk, and gliding feet. In the passionately moving symphony of sound and sight and touch, the whole weal and woe and longing of life throbbed in a threefold pace.

The dwellers in an older world did well to call the dance divine, and to make it the gift of a nimble goddess; truly, without a waltz the world would have lacked a very divine element. Few people can really doubt what the step was that David danced before the ark.

The ball was at a house where members of various parties met by common consent as on neutral ground. There are few such houses in Rome, or, indeed, anywhere else, as there are very few people clever enough, or stupid enough, to manage such an establishment. Men of entirely inimical convictions and associations will occasionally go to the house of a great genius or a great fool, out of sheer curiosity, and are content to enjoy themselves and even to talk to each other a little, when no one is looking. It is neutral ground, and the white flag of the ball-dress keeps the peace as it sweeps past the black cloth legs of clericals and the grey cloth legs of the military contingent, past the legs of all sorts and conditions of men elbowing each other for a front place with the ladies.

Conspicuous by her height and rare magnificence of queenly beauty was Madame de Charleroi, moving stately along as she rested her fingers on the arm of a minister less than half her size. But there was a look of weariness and preoccupation on her features that did not escape her dear friends.

"Diana is certainly going to be thin and scraggy," remarked a black-browed dame of Rome, fat and solid, a perfect triumph of the flesh. She said it behind her fan to her neighbour.

"It is sad," said the other, "she is growing old."

"Ah yes," remarked her husband, who chanced to be standing by and was in a bad humour, "she was born in 1844, the year you left school, my dear." The black-browed lady smiled sweetly at her discomfited friend, who looked unutterable scorn at her consort.

Donna Diana glanced uneasily about the room, expecting every moment to see her brother appear with Miss Carnethy. She was very unhappy about the whole affair, though she could not exactly explain to herself the reason of what she felt. Miss Carnethy was rich, had a certain kind of distinguished beauty about her, was young, well-born,—but all that did not compensate in Madame de Charleroi's mind for the fact that she was a heretic, a freethinker, a dabbler in progressist ideas, and—and—what? She could not tell. It must be prejudice of the most absurd kind! She would not submit to it a moment longer, and if the opportunity offered she would go to Miss Carnethy and say something pleasant to her. Donna Diana had a very kind and gentle Italian heart hidden away in her proud bosom, and she had also a

determination to be just and honest in all situations,—most of all when she feared that her personal sympathies were leading her away.

The diplomat at her side chatted pleasantly, perceiving that she was wholly preoccupied; he talked quite as much to himself as to her, after he had discovered that she was not listening. And Donna Diana determined to do a kind action, and the swinging rhythm of the straining, surging waltz was in her ears. She was just wondering idly enough what the little diplomat had been saying to her during the last ten minutes, when she saw her brother enter the room with Miss Carnethy on his arm. They had met in one of the outer drawing-rooms and had come in to dance. Donna Diana watched them as they caught the measure and whirled away.

"She is terribly interesting," remarked the little man beside her as he noticed where she was looking.

"She is also decidedly a beauty," answered Madame de Charleroi, with the calm authority of a woman whose looks have never been questioned.

People who are in love are proverbially amusing objects to the general public. There is an air of shyness about them, or else a ridiculous incapacity for perceiving the details of life, or at least an absurd infatuation for each other, most refreshing to witness. There is no mistaking the manner of them, if the thing is genuine.

The sadness that had been on Donna Diana's face, and which the resolution to be civil to Miss Carnethy had momentarily dispelled, returned now, as she watched the young couple. She remembered her own courtship, and she