The Other
Mrs Jacobs
The Other Mrs Jacobs

A Matrimonial Complication

By

Mrs Campbell Praed

Author of

"As a Watch in the Night," "Fugitive Anne,"
"Dwellers by the River," etc.

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CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF MISS PENGELLEY

The train bearing Susan Pengelley to London was nearing Paddington. Ealing—Broadway, Acton, flashed past. With every hundred yards the air grew thicker; and, though it was not four o'clock of a late September afternoon, the lamps were lighted at Westbourne Park Station. Here Miss Pengelley roused herself, collected her various odds and ends stowed in the rack, put on and buttoned her gloves —after the manner of a country girl she had taken them off—then waited while the tickets were being collected. She coughed a little as she put down her window. In the south country that morning, where autumn was in its golden glory, the air had been fresh and pure, and Miss Pengelley wondered whether she would be able to endure contentedly this stifling atmosphere. London was wrapped in fog—not that mysterious yellow fog which has its own weird charm, but the grey, smoky, penetrating kind that is an oppression and an irritation.

Susan Pengelley's thoughts went back to the shabby, overcrowded Devonshire Vicarage she had left behind her, and she gulped down a dry sob in her throat. She could fancy her family sitting down to tea—a large, boisterous party; no one wanting
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her especially, most, in fact, envying her for the good start in the world she was about to make. For Miss Pengelley was to receive a pound a week with all expenses paid, and, in these conditions, her outlook on life should be cheerful, seeing that her earnings hitherto—from the sale of flowers through a Daily Mail advertisement, stray teachings in the village, and an occasional story published in women's penny papers—had been slender, fluctuating, and indeed, precarious.

The wonder was that she had been chosen instead of her next sister, Kate, who was brisk, clever and managing—or Polly, who was pretty, and, in a mild way, musical. No doubt, however, Providence had considered the destinies of the parish, since Kate was lay curate to a consumptive father, and Polly played the organ and trained the choir; whereas Susan had no qualities beyond a certain timid bookiness, and capacity for making herself pleasant in a demure and humble way. Of all the sisters she was quite the best fitted for the post of companion. Susan was a small, colourless individual with pale brown hair, light hazel eyes and neat, regular features, in which lay her only pretensions to good looks. Her manner was quiet, self-possessed, and just a little deprecatory. She had the kind of egotism which makes a merit of self-effacement, but is at the same time fully existent and keenly observant.

Susan's thoughts had been running riot over the prospects before her. They were sufficiently tempting. She had met Mrs Jacobs—the lady by whom she was engaged—at the house of a neighbour who happened to have married Mr Jacobs's sister. Mrs Miller, a fat, clever Jewess, had not appealed greatly to the Pengelleys' imagination; but Mrs Jacobs was a very different kind of person, and at first sight she had entirely captivated Susan Pengelley. Mrs Jacobs was a lady of repute in the literary world, where her identity was but thinly veiled under the nom de plume
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of "Spiridia." Her presence caused quite a flutter in the Devonshire village on the occasion of a garden party which Mrs Miller gave in her sister-in-law's honour. People had expected her to be odd, and not quite proper, for the pseudonym "Spiridia" suggested something in her work which, it was supposed, she might be ashamed to own directly. They were surprised to see an elegant, cold and altogether conventional woman, beautifully dressed, with a look in her eyes which made Susan Pengelley feel that the best part of her soul was elsewhere. The girl's simple admiration, and certain other qualities in her, had won her a place in "Spiridia's" consciousness. Susan felt that this was about all that could be said till Mrs Miller told her sister-in-law that Susan Pengelley was looking out for a situation as companion, that she was a good reader, and always got on well with boys; also that she had published one or two little stories, could work a typewriter, and would certainly be equal to the rough correction of proofs. Mrs Jacobs, who was in need of a companion with just such qualifications, acting on impulse, had then and there engaged Susan Pengelley. That was all; but the girl felt as though she had become prime minister to a sovereign, and it was with a beating heart and a mind prepared for important issues that she got herself and her belongings into a cab and gave the order of "Branxton Gardens, Hyde Park." Properly speaking, it was Bayswater, but from Mrs Miller's remarks Miss Pengelley had an idea that she was entering the most fashionable part of London. The Westbourne Terrace houses looked, she thought, extremely imposing, and those in Branxton Gardens, where the cab pulled up presently, seemed to her no less so. Great stuccoed fronts they had, with tall windows, porticos supported by massive pillars, and flights of snowy steps, and an electric jet over each doorway. A street loafer obtruded himself as Susan
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timorously rang the bell; he requested employment in the matter of carrying trunks. Miss Pengelley began shyly bargaining with this person when the hall door was flung open, and a small butler, supported by a big, raw-looking footman, answered her summons.

“Miss Pengelley, I think?” he said, bending forward a thin, sandy-haired face, and displaying an irreproachable shirt cuff as he relieved Miss Pengelley of her dressing bag. “Mrs Jacobs is expecting you, miss. You be off,” to the loafer. “We don’t require you.”

“Oh! I said I’d give him sixpence,” exclaimed Susan, producing the coin from her worn little purse. The butler presented it to the footman, who handed it to the loafer, with directions to “get down that box.”

Miss Pengelley paid the cabman and took in her hand a little basket of late roses, which she had carefully culled from the south wall of the Vicarage, as an offering to “Spiridia.”

The butler led her up a softly-carpeted staircase, putting on the electric light, which revealed deep orange walls hung with what Miss Pengelley supposed to be quaint old paintings, but which were in reality framed specimens of curious needlework. A big glass in a recess draped with embroidery reflected Miss Pengelley’s own countrified figure, as well as tall palms and a marble Psyche over which the fronds drooped. There was another palm on the upper landing, where an imposing piece of dark carving, supporting some odd-shaped plates and tankards of old silver or pewter, stood between two doors facing each other. The butler opened that on Miss Pengelley’s left, at the same time switching on the electric light in a large, oblong drawing-room. This was handsomely furnished in the style of the first Empire, with an Aubusson carpet in which the foot sank, severe consoles, gilt chairs, some fine cabinets
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and an imposing fireplace with an ornate clock. The room was upholstered in pale French brocade and had in it many beautiful things, but to Susan Pengelley's fancy it did not seem to reflect the personality of "Spiridia," except in the matter of a few feminine appurtenances scattered about and a cosy nook by the fireplace, against the angle of a wide bay window, where was an embroidery frame beside a deep, modern chair and a little table holding library books and various oddments.

On the walls were some good pictures, of the Dutch School mostly, and the place of honour at one end was occupied by a life-size portrait of "Spiridia" in a quaint, mediæval-looking dress, sitting by a spinning-wheel. A white sheepskin rug was spread before the fire of ship wood throwing out green and violet gleams, and in front of it a tea-table was laid; the muffins heated over a brass tripod which contained lighted spirit. On the side of the fireplace, opposite the big window, was an invalid-chair which caught Miss Pengelley's attention, with a table beside it laden with books and newspapers, and bearing a vase holding stephanotis. The room was full of lovely flowers in pots and vases, and Miss Pengelley felt ashamed of her humble offering. The scent of hothouse blossoms almost overpowered her, so did the richness of the room, the glints of gilding and of inlaid furniture, the general impression of a luxury to which she was wholly unaccustomed. The butler had withdrawn, leaving Susan alone to enjoy her new sensations.

Miss Pengelley heard a door near at hand open; she guessed that it must be that of the room opposite this one, which she supposed to be Mrs Jacobs's boudoir or study; she could not connect the setting of the room she was in—so purely conventional—with the poetic novels of "Spiridia." Now, she heard the sound of voices; first the butler's announcement
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—merely the tone of a well-trained servant; then higher and sharper notes in comment, and lastly Mrs Jacobs's voice, but not as Miss Pengelley had first heard it, at Mrs Miller's garden party. Then it had been thinly modulated, cold, measured in its polite utterances; now it sounded sweet and full, with a ring of emotion. Who could she be speaking to? Miss Pengelley had no time to speculate. There was a silken rustle and Mrs Jacobs entered the room. She welcomed Miss Pengelley without effusion. "Oh! I hope you had no trouble in finding us. Of course we're quite close to the station. Such a horrid day, isn't it? Our first London fog."

She had shaken hands with Miss Pengelley, and now moved to the tea-table, where the urn was hissing and sending out steam. She poured out some water into the teapot, where the tea was already made.

"I am afraid it has been standing," she said. "I ought to have come sooner. You'll be glad to have some tea, Miss Pengelley."

Susan murmured a commonplace. She was thinking more of Mrs Jacobs than of her tea. The pink-shaded electric light shone straight down upon her hostess. "Spiridia" looked taller and slimmer than ever in her grey teagown, with white fur and some yellowish old lace, which fell from her throat and her wrists as she poured out the tea. From that day Susan associated old lace with "Spiridia." Both the lace and the pseudonym seemed to belong to her specially, while her own name—Mrs Jacobs—was altogether unsuited to her, and Susan disliked it. "Spiridia" had long, thin hands, on which were some fine rings. As she lifted up her head, asking Miss Pengelley if she took sugar, a pair of large, brilliant, greeny-blue eyes flashed from between dark lashes. Mrs Jacobs had an oval face, rather pale, with a sad, slightly-perplexed expression, as though she were not wholly at ease in a world
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which she did not quite understand, and which failed to understand her, with the result that her manner was that of a creature whose natural impulses had been repressed. Above her forehead were masses of soft-looking golden hair, showing a silvery sheen in certain lights where grey was creeping amid the gold. Mrs Jacobs was not a young woman. She must have been about thirty-five, yet it seemed to Susan Pengelley that, even though she might be white-haired and withered, she could never really be old. She was like a woman out of a Norse Saga, Miss Pengelley thought, but a Saga woman would not have had that aloof, composed manner, which so chilled Susan that she did not offer the basket of roses.

She took her tea from Mrs Jacobs's hand, resenting a little that her hostess had asked her no questions about her journey, whether she was tired, cold, or any of those trivial inquiries which at least betoken some interest on the part of the interlocutor. Mrs Jacobs's attention seemed to be entirely diverted. All the time she talked her eyes were turning uneasily towards the door, left open, Susan fancied, on purpose, and at last, as if unable to restrain her impatience, she went to the fireplace and touched the bell.

It was answered almost before the sound could reach downstairs. There was a movement on the landing, a short, dull thud, as of a stick upon the carpeted floor, and, following the direction of Mrs Jacobs's eyes, Miss Pengelley saw, framed in the doorway, the figure of a crippled youth leaning on a crutch, and supported as well by the assiduous butler.

"My son," said Mrs Jacobs, hastily. "It's Miss Pengelley, Ronald," she added by way of introduction. Young Jacobs made an awkward duck of his head sideways as he moved laboriously forward, which might have meant an abrupt salutation for the
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newcomer or a sign for his attendant. Mrs Jacobs went to his side, tendering him the help of her right arm, but the boy fretfully refused it.

"It's all right, mother. Don't make such a fuss," he said.

Mrs Jacobs went back to the tea-table, still anxiously watching her son's progress.

"Oh! Hornblow, take care! That footstool is in Mr Ronald's way. Now, Ronnie, dear—pull up the cushion, Hornblow—are you quite comfortable?"

The youth grunted assent. His appearance, Susan thought, was more prepossessing than his manners, though he was not in the least like his mother. No doubt, she further reflected, he took after his father. Slender, dark, with a thin, slightly-beaked nose, black eyes looking hungrily out on the world of which his infirmity made him but a poor citizen, and a well-shaped but full mouth, the upper lip faintly shaded with black down, Ronald Jacobs would have been good-looking but for his crippled form—one side appeared paralysed—and his peevish expression. He was the centre of thought. Nobody remembered Miss Pengelley, who stood shy, jarred, interested, her untouched cup in her hand. Hornblow, the admirable butler, handed muffins and caviare sandwiches—the last petulantly put aside by the youth. Mrs Jacobs sugared, watered and creamed Ronald's tea, placing it on a table beside his chair. The butler was leaving the room when he paused upon the threshold of the door.

"Mr Jacobs has telephoned, ma'am. He may be a little late for dinner, and begs that you'll go on without him. Mr Jacobs, ma'am, will not take soup."

"Oh, very well," returned Mrs Jacobs, as though this were a matter of ordinary occurrence. "You can call up Mr Jacobs, Hornblow, at 7.45," she added, "and if he hasn't started we will have dinner at the usual time."

Hornblow retired. Mrs Jacobs ministered to her
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son's wants. She had forgotten all about Miss Pengelley, who stood silent, demure, taking stock of the proceedings and reflecting within herself that, as regarded Mr Ronald Jacobs, her office would prove no sinecure. Suddenly Mrs Jacobs addressed her,—

"Oh, Miss Pengelley, do sit down. Won't you have some muffins or cake? Do take care of yourself. Ronnie, dear, what's the matter?"

"I don't like this tea, mum. It's bitter. It's been standing. It's all tannin. You know what Doctor Grier says about that. And I haven't got enough sugar."

"We'll have some made fresh," said Mrs Jacobs. "Yes, it has been standing. I quite forgot. We were so interested in our talk, Ronnie. But Hornblow did tell us. I'll ring for some more," and she touched the electric button.

Miss Pengelley was relieved to find that she was not responsible, as she at first feared, for the tannin in the tea. She sat silent, taking occasional sips and munching the rolled bread and butter which she had preferred to other delicacies. The imperturbable Hornblow reappeared, and bore off the teapot. Probably it occurred to him, as it did to Miss Pengelley, that, seeing there was a kettle and a spirit-stand, Mrs Jacobs might herself have mixed the beverage. Ronald eyed the tea-table with a dissatisfied air.

"I'm sick of caviare sandwiches, mother."

"Oh, Ronnie! And your father has it straight from Russia! Well, try my St Helga herrings—pounded with cayenne. They're delicious."

"I'm sick of St Helga too," said Ronald. "Koenigsen is overdoing his boom at St Helga. Is he coming this evening, mother?"

"I don't know, dear. I'm expecting a telegram," said Mrs Jacobs. She turned to Miss Pengelley. "You'll need a map of the country now you've come among us," she said courteously. "Mr Koenigsen,
the painter, is a countryman of mine—from St Helga, 
you know—our wee North Sea republic. That's why 
I was christened Helga.”

Miss Pengelley knew enough geography to remem­
ber that St Helga was an island between the Orkneys 
and Norway. She also knew that it was autonomous, 
and had a State Chamber and a president of its own. 
Later she learned that Helga Jacobs was the only 
daughter of a now deceased president, and that Karl 
Koenigsen, the painter, had been her humble play­
mate. The Wheel of Fortune turns. Karl Koenig­
sen, with a genius for self-advertisement, was winning 
fame in London as an artist, exploiting a new method; 
Helga had married Mr Jacobs, and wore the laurels 
of “Spiridia.”

Miss Pengelley was recalled from vague visions of 
St Helga by Ronald’s fretful tone.

“What are those things—macaroons? Please pass 
them, Miss—Mother! What did you say was her 
name?”

“Miss Pengelley,” said Mrs Jacobs.

“Oh! Pengelley. That dish at your elbow—don't 
you see it? Yes, that’s right—thanks.”

Susan was obliging by nature, but young Jacobs’s 
dictatorial tone made, in Elizabethan language, her 
gorge rise. She got up constrainedly, and handed 
him the dish of macaroons, from which he slowly 
and deliberately chose two, keeping her standing the 
while, and then began delicately to bite one. Susan 
sat down again, a dull heat causing her face to burn. 
Hornblow came in with fresh tea, but Ronald then 
decided that he preferred a glass of hot milk, which 
was duly brought him. Mrs Jacobs seemed once 
more to remember the existence of her com­
panion.

“Oh, Miss Pengelley, take something. Caviare 
sandwiches—a macaroon? No? Perhaps you’d like 
to see your room?”

“Thank you,” said Miss Pengelley, “if I might.”
"Certainly—the upper housemaid will show you. I always read to Ronald after tea. Pray ask for anything you want."

The footman had answered Mrs Jacobs's summons. "Tell Jennings, please, to come and show Miss Pengelley her room," said Mrs Jacobs.

Miss Pengelley had a disagreeable feeling of being treated as a dependant. She got up stiffly, and then remembered the small basket of roses.

"I thought you might like these," she said, shyly tendering them. "But I see you have so many flowers."

"None so sweet as fresh-picked country ones," replied Mrs Jacobs, with a more natural smile. "They're beautiful, aren't they, Ron?"

The boy gave a grudging assent. His mother watched him anxiously as she picked out the finest rose, and laid it on the table beside him. He took no notice of the action, and Mrs Jacobs said apologetically to Miss Pengelley, "He's been ill. It's such a comfort to see him more like himself."

Then it seemed to occur to her that Ronald's normal condition might not appear attractive to Miss Pengelley, and she added, with an admonitory laugh at her son, "I must explain to Miss Pengelley, Ron, that we're always delighted when you are cross, because it shows that you are getting well."

"I wish you wouldn't fuss so," said the amiable Ron. "Can't I be as I please, without having it commented on?"

Mrs Jacobs turned to the roses. She held the basket to her face and sniffed them tenderly. Her large blue eyes, looking at Susan over the blossoms, were childlike, apart from the rest of her face. There was the same sort of wonder and mystery in them as in the eyes of a child. "I love flowers," she said simply. "Thank you very much for bringing me these."

At that moment the white-capped upper house-
maid appeared, standing at attention in the door-
way.

"Oh! Jennings, show Miss Pengelley her room; and you'll see, please, that she has everything she wants."

"What did you say her name was, mother?" asked Ronald again, when Susan had left the room.

"Oh! Pengelley. Didn't I tell you, dear?"

"What a mouthful! Well, she isn't exactly stimu-
lating," observed Ronald, superciliously, "either in appearance or manner. But if she can read to me while you're writing, and answer your notes, and sympathise with the Universal Agent's views of art and literature, I suppose the rest doesn't matter."

"Ronald! I cannot bear the way you have got into of talking about your father. Why do you call him the Universal Agent?"

"It's what he calls himself."

"Yes, but from you it does not seem respectful."

"Oh! Hang respect! I'm not a baby. And he despises me for being a cripple, and for having some interests in life outside money-making. You needn't grudge me my innings."

"I grudge you nothing—nothing," she answered with almost passionate fervour. "God knows that if I could atone to you by any sacrifice for having brought you into the world as you are, my poor darling, I'd make it without a thought of the cost. But I can't! I can't!"

"Now, mother, don't be tragic. You won't mend matters that way. Let's get out of this room. I always feel depressed in it. Anyone could see that it isn't your taste."

"It is your father's taste, Ronald," said Mrs Jacobs, in gentle rebuke. "I asked him to furnish this room in the way he liked best. He chose beautiful things, and I have never wished them changed."

"I daresay they cost a good deal of money, but for my part I like depths of colour and harmonious
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effects. Oh! if I could only go to India, or Japan, or Egypt, instead of being tied to a stick and a Bath-chairs!"

Touched to the heart, his mother went to him, and, with a movement intensely maternal, laid her fair head for a moment against the youth’s dark curls.

“Ring for Hornblow, mother,” said Ronald, peremptorily. “Let me get back to my own room, and we’ll go on with ‘Lafcadio Hearn.’”

Mrs Jacobs obeyed.

“By the way,” said Ronald, “Doctor Grier will be glad to see Miss Pengelley. He was preaching to me the other day about fagging you. Do I fag you, old lady?”

“You know my pleasure is to please you, Ron. But perhaps it’s fortunate that ‘Spiridia’ doesn’t need to write for her living, or she would not be able to give you so much of her time, dear boy.”

“Oh, bosh!” said Ronald. “One money-making member of a family is quite enough.”

Just then Hornblow entered, and in deferential silence handed the cripple his crutch, while he helped him to rise, and escorted him across the landing to his own sitting-room. Mrs Jacobs followed, carrying a book and sundry miscellaneous properties. Hornblow switched off the light, and the drawing-room was left in shadowy stillness.
CHAPTER II

THE LION'S WHELP

MEANWHILE Miss Pengelley, under the guidance of Jennings, had mounted to her room at the top of two steep flights of stairs—a small, square chamber, simply but comfortably furnished. It had not, however, an inch of space to spare, and Susan found some difficulty in disposing of her things. Jennings, a Cornish woman also, elderly and loquacious, lingered, obligingly making herself of use, till at last Miss Pengelley dismissed her, debating in her own mind whether she should change her dress at once and go down in view of possible duties awaiting her. She had forgotten to ask the dinner hour, and did not like to ring.

It was now six o'clock, and Susan, accustomed to country dinner hours, thought the Jacobs might dine at seven, till she remembered the telephonic message Hornblow had given, and which at the time she had scarcely taken in. It occurred to her that she might be expected to write menus or arrange flowers, which she vaguely understood to come within the scope of a companion's work. In any case, she hoped that at present at least young Mr Jacobs would not be thrown upon her charge, for she looked forward with no delight to ministering to Ronald's wants. Attired in a black silk skirt by no means new, and a pink and black checked blouse cut down at the neck and ruffled with imitation lace, Miss Pengelley considered that she presented a suitable appearance as the
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humble dependant. She picked up her knitting—there were always socks to be made for the boys at home—and shyly descended the stairs.

The drawing-room was in fire-lit dusk, and Miss Pengelley was far too diffident to turn on the electric light for her own benefit. Indeed, she regarded electricity in any form as something strange and mysterious, with which she had best not meddle. Making shift with circumstance, she seated herself near the fire and knitted briskly, her thoughts, as was natural, turning upon her new experiences. She had found the door open, and so left it. The opposite door on the landing had been closed. Miss Pengelley supposed it to be that of Mrs Jacobs's study or boudoir, and drew a mental picture of "Spiridia" in the throes of composition amid her personal surroundings. Presently, through the shut door, came the sound of a piano and of a woman singing. Susan at once concluded that it was Mrs Jacobs, and, dropping her knitting, listened profoundly interested.

The voice was a half contralto, and had those plaintive, vibrant notes which touch the least susceptible heart. Miss Pengelley was emotional in her demure way, and felt thrilled by Mrs Jacobs's song, which in her fancy resembled the cry of a caged wild bird yearning for liberty, and was oddly in harmony with that look Mrs Jacobs had given her over the basket of roses. The words of the song were partly English, it seemed; but at the end of each stanza came a refrain in some foreign tongue, unknown to Miss Pengelley. A long silence followed the song, broken at length by the reverberation of a gong played upon the half landing by a practised hand. Then came the opening of a door, the subdued hum of talk—Hornblow delivering a message perhaps—Ronald's high-pitched rejoinder and consequential laugh, the more melodious ripple of Mrs Jacobs's merriment and her sweeter tones. Then presently a stir in the opposite room; the rustle of silk skirts
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going upstairs, and the peculiar chud of Ronald’s crutch on the thick carpet as he made a move.

Miss Pengelley knitted on for some time in the gloaming, feeling very hungry, for she had eaten nothing since her breakfast, except a sandwich in the train, and her scrappy tea. By-and-by another silken rustle announced Mrs Jacobs’s approach. The room was flooded all of a sudden with electric light, turned on outside the door, and the mistress of the house swept in. She seemed to Susan very elaborately dressed in deep blue brocade, with touches of old lace. The shapely throat rose snowily above the bodice, and the stately head, with its crown of fair hair showed the gleam of a diamond arrow.

Mrs Jacobs came forward to the fire, not at first perceiving Miss Pengelley, whose existence had taken small hold of her pre-occupied mind.

“Oh, Miss Pengelley, don’t move. I hope you’re rested and that Jennings has looked after you all right?”

Mrs Jacobs hardly seemed to expect an answer to her inquiries, as she drew forward a stool and seated herself, holding her hands to the blaze.

“I’m a chilly mortal for a north-country woman,” she said, with her little stiff laugh. “It’s an odd combination, for I believe I have the spirit of the north and yet the southern love of warmth.”

“I thought your singing sounded like that,” Miss Pengelley ventured timidly. “It was you who was singing, wasn’t it?”

“Crooning,” corrected Mrs Jacobs. “Yes, Ronald likes my crooning in the twilight. “It’s so dull for him these long evenings. His eyes are weak, you know, and Doctor Grier won’t let him read much. That is a great deprivation, for Ronald’s chief pleasures are intellectual ones. Poor boy!” Mrs Jacobs sighed and gazed mournfully into the fire. Susan broke the pause by asking the language of the refrain.
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"Oh! a sort of Norwegian Gaelic. It's a folk-song of my own island—St Helga—which nobody ever seemed to have heard of till Karl Koenigsen's pictures made it a sort of fashion in London. But we have a monopoly—he and I—of the St Helga carvings and embroideries. And the silver work, too, is lovely. No, you won't see any here," as Susan glanced round the room. "The St Helga embroideries and carvings don't go with the style of this room, which is an especial fancy of my husband's. He bought most of the things in Paris. At that time, he had opportunities for purchasing good works of art."

Susan replied frankly that she was ignorant in such matters, but that she could see everything in the room was very valuable. She wondered whether Mr Jacobs had been at that time a dealer in such furniture, but Mrs Jacobs did not enlighten her on this point, though she talked bric-a-brac for a few minutes with zest and evident knowledge. Indeed, as she chatted now her manner was much more natural, Susan thought, than when her son had been present. Again she mentioned St Helga and Karl Koenigsen. She seemed to like talking about her own country and her countryman. Susan noticed that the wondering, childlike expression came again into her eyes as she spoke of Karl Koenigsen's growing fame, and the mission he had set himself in regard to the art of St Helga. Apparently Ronald was for the moment off his mother's mind, for Mrs Jacobs did not, as before tea, keep glancing towards the door. By-and-by, Hornblow announced dinner, adding respectfully,—

"I rung up Mr Jacobs, ma'am, and he says he's leaving presently, and will pick you up with the fish."

Mrs Jacobs made a move.

"My son will join us downstairs," she said. "He rests there a little while in the smoking-room, after the labour of dressing."

She led the way. Ronald was being settled at
The Other Mrs Jacobs

table when they reached the dining-room. Miss Pengelley received an impression of stately sumptuousness in this apartment. Walls, ceiling and furniture were of dark carved wood. On the ledge beneath the ceiling was a display of quaint pewter vessels, and between the panels were plaques and dishes in hammered silver which looked old—specimens, no doubt, of St Helga art. The one scarcely accordant note was a sideboard, not in itself incongruous, but which groaned beneath a collection of modern plate.

There were two vacant covers, that at the head of the table, and one opposite Ronald, who sat at his mother's left hand. Susan was signed to a seat between the two empty places.

"Mr Koenigsen, ma'am," suggested Hornblow, as he removed the soup plates. "Shall I have the soup warmed?"

"Karl is always late," put in Ronald.

"Yes, it can be brought back when Mr Koenigsen comes," said Mrs Jacobs, in answer to Hornblow. "And please be particularly careful that the fish is kept hot for Mr Jacobs."

Salmon cutlets were duly handed. Miss Pengelley had not consumed her portion when a latch clicked in the hall door. A man's footsteps sounded crossing the hall to the rooms at the back.

"The Universal Agent!" announced Ronald, and presently his father entered the room.

To Miss Pengelley's observant eyes there was something mechanical about Mrs Jacobs's smile, but she welcomed her husband graciously in response to his inquiry, "How are you, Helga? Been getting on all right?"

He went up to her, apparently oblivious of the presence of a stranger.

"Oh, yes!" she returned. "I'm afraid you've had a hard day. We obeyed your orders, and did not keep back the soup."

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"Quite right. Yes, it's been a hard day. I've been—bothered." He brought out the word slowly, with a forced laugh.

"Bothered?" Mrs Jacobs repeated anxiously.

"Oh, personally. Not in the way of business."

"A troublesome client?" she suggested.

"Yes." He laughed again. "That's it, my dear. And a man's most troublesome client is often himself."

"What is it?"

She looked up at him as he bent over her chair—she was sitting at the end of the table near the door by which he had entered—and touched the hand which lay on her shoulder. "Aren't you well, Lion?"

"Grier hasn't been here to-day?" he asked suddenly.

"No," she answered, "Ronald is much better. But aren't you well, Lion?"

"Yes, yes. Don't you worry," he hastily rejoined. "There's nothing the matter with me." He moved to his place, and his eyes fell upon Miss Pengelley as, after a "Well, youngster!" they travelled along the opposite side and met her gaze.

"Miss Pengelley—my husband," said Mrs Jacobs, adding, "Miss Pengelley came up from near Tavistock this afternoon."

"Ah, yes, I remember. I ought to apologise, Miss Pengelley, for being late and for not having dressed." Susan had risen to shake hands, and responded gratefully to his greeting, which was the pleasantest she had received. Hornblow, with the sherry decanter in one hand, hovered about his master, casting at the same time an admonishing glance at the young footman who appeared in the doorway carrying a fresh relay of fish.

"William!—the sauce. Salmon cutlets, sir—hot from the fire."

Mr Jacobs helped himself in an abstracted manner.
"Sherry, sir? What claret, sir?"
"Whisky and potash," said Mr Jacobs. "No, Hornblow, you can bring up a bottle of Pol Roger, '89."
"Very good, sir."
Mr Jacobs half excused himself for the indulgence.
"I feel a bit down. You'll have some champagne, too, Helga? It'll do Miss Pengelley good after her journey. Two bottles, Hornblow. I thought Koenigsen was dining to-night?" he added, turning to his wife.
"I had a telegram from Brighton. He's been painting someone there," replied Mrs Jacobs. "He said he would be late."
"But he's coming? I had something I wanted to see Koenigsen about to-night."
"Oh, yes, he's coming," put in Ronald. "He's promised to put a touch or two to my drawings before I send them up to-morrow."
"I say, young man, is that altogether on the square?"
"Oh! it isn't anything that matters," interposed Mrs Jacobs. "Mr Koenigsen has told me that he doesn't really touch up Ron's drawings. He just shows him where they might be improved. It is such an interest to my boy sending in to these competitions, and such a pleasure when he wins a prize," Mrs Jacobs added, turning with polite explanatoriness to Miss Pengelley. "I'm sorry to say that he is not as busy as he ought to be just now with his studies. The tutor left us just before Ron's last illness, and we have not yet found him another. I am so grateful to Karl Koenigsen for helping and amusing Ron as he does." Mr Jacobs looked up from his fish in a ruminative way—first at the boy and then at his wife.
"You think he really does like Ron then—does he, Helga?"
"Why, of course," said Mrs Jacobs, laughing
The Lion’s Whelp

sweetly. “That’s why he comes here. I don’t know what Ron would do without Karl Koenigsen.”

Mr Jacobs turned to Miss Pengelley.

“I daresay you’ve heard of Karl Koenigsen, the St Helgan painter.”

“Only since I came here,” said Susan.

“You mustn’t tell him that,” said Mr Jacobs. “Koenigsen wouldn’t like to feel that he was unknown even in the wilds of Devonshire. That sort of thing is his weakness.”

“It seems a pardonable one in a celebrity,” said Miss Pengelley. She was feeling less shy, and Mr Jacobs somehow attracted her. He had done so from the moment that he had entered, and had appeared so absorbed in his wife as to be unconscious of anyone else in the room. Her intuitional faculty, which was quick to penetrate new situations, scented severe agitation in him, which he was trying to hide by random talk. She had now full opportunity for studying him. He was a man of fifty or more, of strong Jewish type, dark, with a beaked nose, a heavy black moustache, and hair which was almost white. He had the keen look of a sharp business man, but he did not appear aggressively moneyed, nor even aggressively Jewish. He caught up Miss Pengelley.

“Most social weaknesses are pardonable. We’re all snobs at heart, and those on the lowest rung of the ladder have got to fight their way to the top. Koenigsen’s enemies say that he kicks down his ladders. I haven’t seem him do it, and I don’t know why I should believe ill of him till I’ve proved it. My opinion of Karl Koenigsen is that he’s a clever, good-hearted chap, with an eye to the main chance, and his head screwed the right way on to his shoulders.”

“Hear! hear!” observed Ronald. The youth had thrown himself sideways in his chair, while he rather contemptuously refused a dish of sweetbreads Hornblow offered him.
The Other Mrs Jacobs

"Oh! do, Ronnie, dear," urged his mother. "You know Doctor Grier likes you to have sweetbreads—they're so nourishing."

It occurred to Susan that Mrs Jacobs also needed nourishing. She had a hacking cough of which no one seemed to take any notice. The bones showed through her skin, and she was pale, except for a hectic spot on either cheek. She dallied with her food listlessly.

Ronald allowed the dish to come to his shoulder before he petulantly refused it once more. His father's eyes were upon him with an expression of faint disdain and disapproval.

"Sweetbreads and truffles—and Ronald won't have any!" remarked Mr Jacobs. "When I was an office-boy, at somewhere about fifteen shillings a week, I'd never seen a sweetbread nor heard of a truffle."

There was a humorous sadness in Mr Jacobs's remarks. He seemed in the mood for retrospection. Catching Susan's eye again, he said,—

"Perhaps it is not necessary for me to observe, Miss Pengelley, that I'm a self-made man. I can't even glory in the proverbial half-crown, for to the best of my belief it was a two-franc piece with which I started life at Helsingkraad. Helga doesn't mind my mentioning it. 'Spiridia' has the glory, and Ahasuerus-Jacobs makes the money."

There was nothing purse-proud in the man's manner, whatever the words might have been.

"Miss Pengelley, I see that you are amused at my name—Ahasuerus-Jacobs." He spoke it with a dryly humorous intonation. "It is a mouthful, but it is not exactly my own. I got it from old Ahasuerus the Jew, as they used to call him—as noble an old man as ever bowed in the synagogue. He started the firm, and took me into partnership with him, and called it Ahasuerus-Jacobs, and so it has been ever since, though Ahasuerus has been gathered to his fathers these ten years back. Ahasuerus-Jacobs I
sign my cheques, but I—I am Judah, the Lion's whelp."

"The Lion's whelp?" Susan repeated, not seizing his drift.

"Don't you know your Bible, Miss Pengelley? I understood that you were a clergyman's daughter. Turn up Jacob's blessing upon his son Judah—'Judah, the lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?'"

Ronald stared at his father, and Hornblow paused in the act of pouring him out more champagne. It was clear that Mr Jacobs was not quite in his usual mood. And indeed there was something odd, wild, emotional, in the man's utterance as he rolled out the Old Testament words. Miss Pengelley had a curious feeling that she was on the borders of tragedy, and in Mrs Jacobs's face, as she gazed anxiously at her husband, there seemed to be a reflection of the same thought. Mr Jacobs raised his glass of champagne to his lips and bowed to his wife in a queer, formal fashion that seemed but a covering to deep feeling struggling within him.

"I drink to your health, Helga, my dear. To your health, prosperity and happiness."

Mrs Jacobs, still startled and looking agitated, bowed in nervous acknowledgment of the toast. Ronald only stared. Susan had nothing but water in which to drink it, having disclaimed the need of wine, but Hornblow, with the air of an officiant at holy mysteries, went round again, at a sign from his master, filling all their glasses with champagne. And just then, to general relief, came a diversion. The front door bell gave a long ting. Hornblow signed to the footman. "Fish back!" he said in a dramatic aside and went out. There was a slight disturbance in the hall. Ronald's face brightened, and Mrs Jacobs, with the air of one released from strain, said, "Here is Mr Kœnigsen at last."

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The Other Mrs Jacobs

He came in with mock hesitation and a string of apologies, protesting against the bringing back of the dinner. His train, he said, had been late, and his cabman had been drunk. Koenigsen was a large, fair man, with prominent blue eyes, yellow curling hair, and a blonde beard not too carefully trimmed. He shook hands in an exaggeratedly deferential manner with Mrs Jacobs, and was jocular and friendly with his host.

"You got my letter, Jacobs, about that little bit of business?" Mr Jacobs nodded.

"If Ahasuerus had been alive, Koenigsen, he'd be wanting you for a partner instead of me. This is the man who's pushing my wife's island, Miss Pengelley. Mr Koenigsen—Miss Pengelley."

The artist and Susan exchanged quick glances and stiff bows.

"St Helga will keep moving, Karl, as long as you're behind it. I've sent out that paragraph for you. What about the Duchess?"

"You'll know all about her on Friday evening, Jacobs. She can wait till then," nonchalantly returned Koenigsen.

"It's a clever stroke of yours, Karl—very clever—the seal of approval on your gallery scheme." Jacobs turned again to Miss Pengelley. "Here's a painter not content with ordinary channels like R.A.'s and common art folk. He must start a St Helgan Gallery on his own account."

"With a royal duchess to boss the show," put in Ronald, pertly.

"Oh, 'Spiridia' is going to boss my show," said Mr Koenigsen, smiling at his hostess.

"No, no," said Mrs Jacobs, "you'd much better have a duchess."

"I don't want a duchess, I want 'Spiridia,'" said Koenigsen. "Probably there will be three duchesses at the opening of my St Helgan Gallery, but there will be only one 'Spiridia.'"
"'Spiridia' isn't a St Helgan name," objected Ronald. "I can't think, mother, why you chose such a silly pseudonym."

"Nor I," answered Mrs Jacobs, imperturbably. "She would be St Helga herself," said Koenigsen, "in national costume, against a background of St Helgan tapestry."

"With the distaff and spinning-wheel—just as you painted her, Karl," said Ronald.

"Just as I painted her," repeated Koenigsen, "with the distaff and spinning-wheel—emblematic of St Helgan industry."

Mrs Jacobs protested. The artist pleaded. Mr Jacobs joined in the talk, which now ignored "Spiridia's" companion. Koenigsen was a clever talker and tossed repartee back to his host. Mr Jacobs took a good deal of champagne. There was a certain recklessness in his gaiety. Miss Pengelley wondered whether he was always so, and whether he had drunk too much, or whether, as she seemed to divine, the conviviality was put on to conceal an undercurrent of gloom. She looked to see if his wife were discomposed by it, but apparently Mrs Jacobs was relieved from anxiety, for she was chatting animatedly. Miss Pengelley was amused by the conversation, though she did not understand the metropolitan flavour of it, the Bohemian allusions and artistic shop-talk. Koenigsen rapidly disposed of the courses in which he was behind the others, and to Mrs Jacobs's satisfaction Ronald now ate heartily of the entrée of sweetbreads. The painter seemed to have a stimulating effect upon everybody, and, though she was sure that she disliked him, Miss Pengelley was obliged to admit a magnetic attraction in his personality. She found it natural that he should already have done great things, and be contemplating more ambitious ventures. His many-sidedness was interesting. Gradually she discovered a subtle distinction between his manner
to Mr Jacobs and that in which he addressed "Spiridia"; also that he played upon Mrs Jacobs's maternal sympathies through his attentions to Ronald.

Susan was interested in all she heard and in all that passed before her. She felt as though she were a spectator at a play. A literary savour crept into the discourse. Ronald, who was a young prig, as well as a cub, decided Miss Pengelley, pronounced an opinion upon the book he was having read to him, by Lafcadio Hearn, and Mrs Jacobs had a good deal to say also on that subject. Mr Jacobs dropped out of the discussion. He had forgotten the existence of his wife's companion. Miss Pengelley saw that. His whole attention was centred upon his wife herself. He sat silent, watching "Spiridia" as she leant her graceful head towards Koenigsen, looking more than ever, Susan thought, like a mediæval saint—no—a Saga woman. But Susan was touched and surprised by the expression of yearning devotion and deep sadness on the countenance of Mr Jacobs as he watched his wife. It was, to her fertile imagination, as though an embodiment of tragedy appeared, having suddenly doffed the mask and socks of comedy. What did it mean? She averted her eyes so that he should not find out that she was aware of the change in him, and presently he pulled himself together, and launched a remark. They were speaking of St Helga again, and Mrs Jacobs, eyes were alight as they talked of her dear northern island. Koenigsen, it was clear to the observant country mouse, regarded St Helga as capital to be turned to account in his profession; whereas Mrs Jacobs seemed to think of it as too sacred and beloved to be even used in her books. The one spoke like an exile; the other as an escaped prisoner from its shores. The novelist's voice thrilled Susan once more, as she talked of a lone headland which she and the artist both knew and which he had
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painted. Mr Kœnigsen sneered at the opinion upon this picture of a critic who had never seen Altbröd. It was he himself, he declared, who had discovered St Helga from an artistic point of view. He was determined to exploit St Helga. Had he not painted villages of St Helga, children of St Helga, fishers of St Helga, women of St Helga, and chief among them—with a low bow towards Mrs Jacobs—St Helga herself! Yes, Miss Pengelley thought, Mrs Jacobs would certainly make a good model for St Helga. She had an un-worldworn, fifteenth-century look. Sophisticated though she appeared in many ways, the spirit of a dreamy north maiden sometimes looked out from her eyes, which were like the sea.

By-and-by, Mrs Jacobs rose, with a glance at Susan. But she lingered outside the dining-room door—bidding Miss Pengelley go first—in order that she might presently watch the laborious ascent of her son, supported by the inestimable Hornblow. Ronald would have remained had he had his own way, for he liked Kœnigsen's stories, and considered himself a man at sixteen. But his father dismissed him in a decided manner as he hung back.

"No, youngster, you join the ladies." And Ronald was obliged to take up his crutch and depart.
CHAPTER III

THE DEATH WARRANT

The two men were alone. Koenigsen pulled his chair a little nearer to his host. The door was closed. Hornblow had placed cigars and a lighted taper in its silver holder. Mr Jacobs pushed along the decanters.

"Help yourself, Koenigsen."

The painter did so, commenting upon the bouquet and excellence of the vintage.

"Yes, it's good wine," rejoined Mr Jacobs. "I bought it at the Fattorini sale. Now about that paragraph of yours and the Duchess, and all the rest of that St Helgan business. We'll get through that first, and afterwards I've got some business of my own I'd like to talk to you about."

"With the greatest pleasure," said Koenigsen, on the alert at once. "Don't bother about me."

"Oh, mine's a small affair—a personal matter, but to your advantage perhaps. Well, I think you'd best shorten that paragraph for Shade and Sparkle. It'll do for one or two other papers as well." He named them. "I can arrange it for you. Of course the directors know my wife is a St Helgan woman, and old Brack—the President—though he died a pauper, left a name behind him. But—I suppose the Duchess's commission is genuine?"

"Certainly," said Koenigsen. "That is to say, it will be after my show."

"Oh! well, perhaps it had better be put am-
The Death Warrant

biguously. That's really all I wanted to know. You see, one can't exactly take liberties with royalties; and that's the sort of thing editors want to be sure about. I admire your business methods, Kœnigsen. One's got to be smart in these days. All the same, you must know where you are when it comes to royalties. The Duchess is sure to be there, I suppose?"

"Quite sure."

"That's all right. And about my wife receiving for you. Of course she's a St Helgan woman, and you were playmates, weren't you, in St Helga?"

"Yes. That is to say, Mrs Jacobs was the daughter of the President, you see."

"I know. The wonder was she married me! But a President of St Helga don't count much. A queer little island that is protected by every Government and no Government—only good for tapestry and fish. You're quite right to exploit it. The enamels and old silver have caught on extraordinarily. Were all your specimens made at St Helga?"

"Oh, certainly," said Kœnigsen. "I know the manufactories. In fact, I've got an interest in the place. You know Altbröd—that part north of the island?"

"No, I don't. Was never in St Helga but once in my life. It was at Helsingkræad that I met Helga—after the old President had been turned out, you know."

"Yes, I know," returned Kœnigsen, sympathetically.

"Queer marriage laws they have in St Helga—something like the Scotch," went on Jacobs. "I remember—" He seemed to be wandering from his subject. Kœnigsen pulled him back.

"Then it's all right about that 'ad.'?"

"Yes, yes, that's all right. I'd rather like you to come with me to the board meeting on Shade and Sparkle, and bring the sketches of your gallery.
We might lunch in the City. Board meeting's on Wednesday—2.30."

"I shall be delighted," said Kœnigsen.

"What I wanted to say was about Helga receiving for you—being a St Helgan woman. I trust you, Kœnigsen, to see that the thing is properly done. Her position as a daughter of the late President recognised and explained to the Duchess—you understand? I don't want any gutter Press comments and innuendoes, and horrible reporting women, lying, to make capital out of 'Spiridia.' I may count upon you, Kœnigsen, to see that Helga is protected in every possible way?"

"My dear Jacobs! surely you realise that there's nobody in the world I hold more sacred than your wife? I should consider her interests far beyond my own."

"That's good. I believed it of you. A man couldn't have been brought up with my Helga, no matter in what humble capacity—oh, yes, I know, she's told me, but it's of no consequence and we don't talk about it—without feeling that sort of feudal loyalty. I've heard you and Helga speak of the old feudal spirit in St Helga, though I'm afraid the commercial spirit has got the better of that nowadays. Still, you two understand it, cherish it. You'll always remember that though Helga Brack married Judah Jacobs, the self-made Jew advertising agent, she's got the blood of North Sea heroes in her veins, and must be upheld and guarded and treated with the respect she deserves. I've tried to do it, Kœnigsen. It's been my sole object in making money. When I die she'll have everything—left to my wife absolutely, you understand. I wanted to show my trust in Helga—she'll look after the boy, if he lives, and it's a nice pile."

"I'm sure of that, old man. Ahasuerus-Jacobs is a paying business."

"Oh, well, whether it'll go on without me is
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another matter. There's a pretty sharp junior partner, but not a man I could trust—not one to whom I could confide Helga's interests. An outsider is better for that. Are you following me, Kœnigsen?"

"Perfectly, Jacobs. But I can't imagine why you are considering these eventualities."

"I'll tell you presently. As regards the firm of Ahasuerus-Jacobs, everything depends on personal management. I've been realising that for some time, and Helga's eggs will not all be in one basket. I've no relations, Kœnigsen, not a soul in the world belonging to me except a sister, who doesn't count much—nor has Helga."

"Really!" put in Kœnigsen, politely. "Nor, I may add, have I."

"All the better. And you're St Helga born; there must be the national sympathy. Women don't understand business, and you're a sharp business man, Kœnigsen. I notice you never lose a point. You wouldn't let that junior partner have things all his own way in the settling up. Helga knows nothing about business. Writing-women never do. She'd be taken in. She'd need a man to back her. Now, the long and short of it is, Kœnigsen, that I had a new will drawn up to-day which I shall sign to-morrow, and in it I've left you £5000—just a little set off for your trouble—and appointed you joint executor with Helga."

Kœnigsen was taken aback. £5000! The sum was not a large one, but it meant a good deal to him. And what a wealthy widow Helga would be were her husband to die now! What had put the idea of death into Jacob's head? The man looked fairly healthy; sallow, beaky and, perhaps, a little worn, as was but natural after a long day in the City: but, as far as illness was concerned, Kœnigsen had never heard it mentioned in connection with Jacobs.

"My dear fellow!" he exclaimed, "it's extremely
generous of you, and I can't tell you how I value your confidence, which, I assure you on my sacred word of honour, will never be misplaced. But you're a young man yet, and this will you're speaking of is not likely to come into operation. I venture to prophesy that you will make several more before you join the majority. I only hope that you will continue to feel the same trust in me. I appreciate it, Jacobs, I assure you, beyond words. Still, there's no reason, old fellow, is there, why you should feel feverish about testamentary arrangements?"

"That's just it!" Jacobs seemed suddenly to collapse. He lifted his glass of wine, but set it down without putting it to his lips, then, leaning forward, dropped his head between his hands and remained so for quite a minute. His cheroot smouldered on his empty dessert plate. Kœnigsen meanwhile puffed on in silence; at length he took his cigar from his mouth and savoured the aroma of it in a meditative manner. He was knocking off the ash when Jacobs raised a haggard face and stared at him gloomily.

"My dear Jacobs, what is the matter?"

"I've had my death warrant, Kœnigsen. That's what it means—that's why I went to my lawyer's to-day and made him draw out a new will—simple, short and to the point."

"Good heavens, Jacobs! Are you speaking seriously?"

"It's God's truth, as far as medical science can interpret it. But, first of all, give me your word not to breathe anything of this to Helga."

"You have my word," said Kœnigsen, briefly. "But tell me—is this that man Grier's verdict?"

"Do you know him?" asked Jacobs.

It was on the tip of Kœnigsen's tongue to say "I know his wife," but he amended the sentence to "I know him slightly," and added, "I also know that he's an alarmist."
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“So I thought at first, and went to another man. He confirmed Grier’s opinion. This morning I went to a third. The verdict was the same. After that I considered it wisest to instruct my lawyer.”

“They may be mistaken,” said Koenigsen. “Doctors do make mistakes, you know.”

“Not three of them, in separate consultations. Anyhow, it was good enough for me. I daresay I shall consult others; but, to tell the truth, I felt that Grier was right. He’s a queer man—knows what he’s talking about, medically, at anyrate.”

“He’s a queer man,” repeated Koenigsen.

“A bit of a brute,” rejoined Jacobs, “but straight.”

“Is he straight?” said Koenigsen. “Well, I’ve heard—”

“What?” asked Jacobs. “He attends my wife.”

“Oh! nothing—only hints. Ever met his wife?”

“Didn’t know he was married,” said Jacobs.

“He is. Yes, of course, he’s married. To an uncommonly pretty woman.” Koenigsen laughed rather fatuously. “Oh, yes! he’s very much married—a long time married. She’s a fascinating little dark devil of a woman.”

“I don’t like fascinating little dark devils of women,” said Jacobs. “I knew one once.” He spoke in a retrospective way again. “She led me a dance. Well, she’s dead—a long time ago—before I married Helga. Look here, Koenigsen!” he said abruptly, “I feel an interest in you. Don’t you go taking up with fascinating devils of women, who ain’t just the type you want to trot down the vale with, and put in front of you for the world to say, ‘He can’t be such a bad sort to have got a wife like that.’ Do you suppose I don’t know how the world speaks of me and Helga? I worship her the more for it.”

“Jacobs, old man,” said Koenigsen, “what is it the doctor says is the matter with you?”

“Aneurism of the heart,” replied Jacobs, grimly. “There’s but one end to that. I may last a year or
two with care, or I may die at any moment if it comes to strain. You've given me your word, mind—nothing to Helga."

"I've given it to you," said Køenigsen. "Upon my soul, Jacobs, I'm sorry; but I hope it isn't so bad as you think."

"No good crying over spilt milk. I've lived too fast—only in the way of business understand, at all events since I married. A man with a wife like Helga doesn't lead a double life. But, when you begin on nothing a year, you can't make a fortune without spending the only capital you've got—your health. And that's what I've done. But I don't regret it; I'd do the same over again, since it assures Helga's future. But there comes a time when one must lie down at last. It's a case of the lion coming up from his prey. I've never wished harm to any man, but in the City you've got to fight, and it's the best fighter that comes uppermost. Well, the old lion has couched down now. I can't get that text out of my head; the wife has always called me Lion. What is it, Hornblow?"

"If you please, sir, Mrs Jacobs thinks you might not have remembered, perhaps, that dinner was later than usual; and Mr Ronald would like to have a chat with Mr Køenigsen before going to bed, sir."

"All right! You go up, Køenigsen. I'll follow you presently."

Hornblow closed the door again and the two men got up. Køenigsen took his cigar from the amber holder he habitually used, and which he now replaced in its case. Jacobs held out his hand across the corner of the table.

"I can depend on you, Køenigsen, as a St Helgan man, to look after my Helga's interests."

"You may depend on me," said Køenigsen. With an apparent impulse he took Jacobs's other hand. But the painter's palms were clammy. Ordinarily he shook hands in limp fashion, but his grip to-night
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was tenacious. It deceived his host. Nevertheless, it was of himself in connection with the woman who was the central object of both their thoughts that the painter was thinking now, rather than of the friend whom he already saw dead before him. Kœnigsen was preparing to kick down the last ladder by which he had climbed.

Meanwhile, in the drawing-room the evening had been dull. Mrs Jacobs worked at her embroidery in an abstracted manner, after having set Miss Pengelley to show Ronald a new game of Patience. Ronald was extremely surly. Even his mother apologised for him. It was then that she sent the message by Hornblow to the dining-room.

Kœnigsen entered alone.

"Where is my husband?" asked Mrs Jacobs.

"He's coming up presently," and Kœnigsen went across as he spoke to look at Mrs Jacobs's embroidery as though he had a proprietary interest therein. His manner was caressing. He bent over her so closely that his blonde beard touched her hair.

Mrs Jacobs accepted his attentions with a sublime unconsciousness, clearly showing that she wished him to be agreeable to Ronald, but not pressing the point, as the boy was just then employed upon a difficult Patience, in the course of which he rudely contradicted Miss Pengelley, and insisted upon her working out the game all over again.

Susan at first, in the intricacies of her occupation, caught occasional snatches of Kœnigsen's talk, which seemed mainly about the party he was giving on Friday—the opening, as she gleaned, of his St Helgan Gallery, to a number of persons, distinguished or otherwise. That there were some guests not specially welcome Miss Pengelley learned from the frankness with which Mr Kœnigsen bewailed the necessity he was under of receiving certain dealers, vulgar patrons, and unpresentable Press people who, socially speaking, would be a blemish upon the lustre of his...
The Other Mrs Jacobs

entertainment. It occurred casually to Miss Pengelley that these detrimentals might constitute some of the ladders Mr Koenigsen was credited with wishing to kick down.

A question of etiquette in regard to the particular duchess of royal birth and artistic proclivities seriously perplexed him, and he was looking to St Helga—as he called Mrs Jacobs—to help him through his difficulties.

"You are my saint—my guardian angel—my inspiration!" he exclaimed. "Without you I could do nothing."

Mrs Jacobs gazed up at him, faint sarcasm in her clear blue eyes. He did not often indulge in such florid compliments. She smiled quizzically.

"I don't know when I began to be your guardian angel, Karl," she said.

"When you were a dainty little lady of seven, and I mended your hoop for you, and drew a picture of you, in the blue and red chalks with which the fishermen made their tallies, on the end of an old barrel—do you remember?" He had glanced across towards the pair at the other end of the room. They seemed engrossed with their Patience. But he dropped his voice as a precautionary measure.

Mrs Jacobs laughed outright.

"I don't remember, but I'll take your account for granted—the budding Giotto! You've been telling that story to an interviewer. I read it not long ago in one of the papers. I thought—well, I thought, Karl, that you would have had better taste than to talk about me quite so freely. You may have drawn me in red and blue chalks on the end of a barrel at St Helga, but it is an episode that I have totally forgotten."

"That's likely enough," he returned, in no way abashed by her gentle rebuke. "You were—the President's daughter."

"Poor, dethroned President!" she put in. "I can
only think of him as my beloved father, who was unhappy, and is dead. You knew me, Karl, when I was prosperous—not later, in the days of my tribulation."

"If I had but known you then," he exclaimed, "life might have been different for both of us. If I had been with you in the time of your sorrow instead of—your husband!"

"He was very good to me," she said thoughtfully. "No one could have been kinder."

"But you didn't love him, Helga. You never loved him. Be honest with yourself. You married him from gratitude. To think of you as the wife of Ahasuerus-Jacobs!"

"Hush!" she said with sudden dignity, glancing anxiously at her son and Miss Pengelley. "I can listen to nothing in disparagement of my husband. I am proud, and—and—glad to be the wife of the best man I have ever known."

"Nevertheless, he is Ahasuerus-Jacobs, the advertising agent and money-lender. I don't disparage your husband. Far from it, Helga. I respect and admire him. That I must envy him, too, is my—misfortune. Forgive me, for the sake of the days when you were my princess and I your vassal. It was no sin to worship you then. And, after all, you are the same Helga and I the same Karl. How can I help worshipping you still—my ideal—my dream lady?"

Helga shook her head. There was a shade of embarrassment in her manner, but she tried to laugh again lightly.

"Spare me any more of your rhapsodies, Karl. You are talking nonsense to-night. I can't think what has come over you. You must have been reading some of my novels. 'Spiridia' is always accused by critics of over-fine sentiment—of trotting out ideals, dream ladies, fairy princes, and all the rest of our romantic stock-in-trade. Hush! hush!" as he
protested in a fervid whisper. "Real life is too commonplace to deal in that sort of thing; and you and I are too good friends to think of it when we're alone together. We'll keep it for the British public—Thackeray's 'Great Big Stupid,' you know—supplied with ink and oils. And that reminds me—are you going to look at Ron's drawings? Ron! what have you done with the cards? Oh, Miss Pengelley, don't trouble!"

For Ronald, in a fit of temper, had flung the neat little piles on to the carpet.

"Now, you can pick 'em up, Miss Pengelley," he cried pettishly; "and so much for your wonderful new Patience."

"My dear Ron!" exclaimed his mother, admonishingly, "I am sure you must be tired. It's too late for you to be up."

"And you've monopolised Karl all the evening! Haven't you done with all this St Helgan rot? I want you, Karl."

"Gently, boy," put in the painter, in indulgent tones. "And look here—you're making a mistake about this Still-Life Exhibition. You've two days yet before you need send up. I'll come to-morrow afternoon, and criticise the drawings by daylight."

"That will do very nicely," said Mrs Jacobs. "I'm going out between three and five. You shall take care of Ron while Miss Pengelley does some typing for me. I intend to make you useful," she added, nodding at Miss Pengelley, "for I'm dreadfully behindhand with my new book. Now, Ron, here is Hornblow for you. You really must go off."

The assiduous Hornblow brought young Jacobs his crutch, and amid grumbling and cross adjurations to his slaves to "leave him alone and not bother," the youth, under Hornblow's and his mother's guidance, was conveyed across the landing. Mrs Jacobs turned at the door. "I'll be back presently, and we'll go down, Karl, and keep Lion company. Evidently he
The Death Warrant

prefers the smoking-room. Miss Pengelley, if you're
tired, you mustn't mind leaving us."

Thus virtually dismissed, Miss Pengelley, who had
certainly no desire for Koenigsen's company, said
good-night, and retired to the solitude of her small
chamber.
CHAPTER IV

DOCTOR GRIER

Susan breakfasted alone the following morning, which was something of a relief to her. It gave her time to collect her thoughts for the day. She ventured to ask for the morning papers. Hornblow, who replied, told her that they were all taken up to Mr Ronald’s room, and that he would try to obtain one for her as soon as possible, but Susan bade him not trouble, and felt sorry for having asked. She had not the least idea what duties she would be required to perform, and after breakfast she dawdled over the fire, her knitting in her hand, not liking to sit down and do anything on her own account, for she expected every minute to be summoned to Mrs Jacobs.

Jennings had told her—in answer to her inquiries—when she brought the hot water and early cup of tea, that Mrs Jacobs breakfasted alone, and that Mr Ronald also had his breakfast before rising. Apparently the different members of the family were accustomed to take their morning meals separately, for, according to Jennings’s further information, Mr Jacobs had his at a very early hour before starting for his office. Mr Jacobs was certainly a hard-working man. Thinking over the previous evening, Susan felt her impression concerning Mr Jacobs confirmed. There was something about the man which strongly appealed to her—not least the tragic element she had intuitively discovered underlying the outward bonhomie. She wondered to what this could be due. It
Doctor Grier

did not seem possible that it could be laid to his wife's charge. Yet Miss Pengelley had divined that, notwithstanding her gracious appreciation of him, and her care for his comfort, "Spiridia" did not love her husband. And in reading "Spiridia's" books Miss Pengelley had formed the conclusion that their author could love deeply and passionately. Had the capacity for love crystallised entirely in mere maternal devotion to her afflicted son? It appeared so, and yet Susan felt instinctively that this was not the case.

Presently, as she had expected, Susan received a summons from Mrs Jacobs, who sent for her to her study, and the girl went upstairs wondering where this room could be. She found it adjoining Mrs Jacobs's bed-chamber—a tiny slip, evidently intended originally for a dressing-room. There were two or three ship logs burning in the grate, and giving a cheerful look to the little room, which, small though it was, had the stamp of its owner's individuality. The walls, an indescribable tint between rose and violet, were lined half-way with book-cases—chiefly works of reference, for Mrs Jacobs kept the more interesting part of her library for her son's benefit in his sitting-room. A writing-table and a typewriter stand occupied the greater part of the available space. Besides, there were a couple of armchairs and two small upright ones. That practically comprised the furniture of the room. But with flowers, dainty silver knick-knacks, St Helgan tapestry, and a few rare bits of china, the little study looked most attractive.

Mrs Jacobs met Miss Pengelley at the door and seemed at first almost unwilling that her companion should enter this sanctum, thus Susan only caught glimpses of it behind "Spiridia's" tall, slight form. The needs of business, however—for Susan was taking directions to answer notes and type some sheets of manuscript—compelled Mrs Jacobs to let her secretary come in, but she did not ask her to sit
The Other Mrs Jacobs
down. Miss Pengelley, however, did not resent this
grudging attitude on the part of "Spiridia." It was
in keeping with a certain virginal reticence in regard
to the woman's real individuality—a different thing
from the outward presentment—which to the adoring
Devonshire girl seemed already sacrosanct. But in
manner Mrs Jacobs was perfectly commonplace.
"I have a spare typewriter which I will send down
to the dining-room for you," said she. "You'd better
work there, I think. Nobody is likely to disturb you,
for the room is only used at meal times. You under­
stand a Remington, Miss Pengelley?"
Susan said she had learnt on a Remington, and
glanced over the sheaves of sprawling manuscript
handed her. She saw that the writing would be
difficult to decipher. Spiridia did not write a legible
hand, as she herself confessed, with a frank laugh.
"My thoughts always go so much faster than my
pen, that I find it a hard matter to keep up with
them," she said. "However, I hope you will be able
to make this out. If you cannot, please leave spaces,
and we can fill in the bits afterwards. I shall ask
you not to come and disturb me with questions, Miss
Pengelley, for I like to take this hour or two un­
interrupted if possible, as soon as my housekeeping
duties are over and before I go in to my boy, who is
not yet up. By-and-by, perhaps, you will read to
him instead of me, and then I shall be able to get
through more work."
Susan nodded pleasantly, but with a mental
reservation. Though she did not mind how many
hours a day she spent in typing for Mrs Jacobs, she
was in no hurry to act as reader for Master Ronald.
Seeing now that Mrs Jacobs no longer required her,
she tucked the manuscript under her arm and ran
downstairs. In a few minutes Hornblow appeared in
the dining-room panting under the weight of the
Remington, a former-grade one of the same kind
as that with which Susan had been accustomed to
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type her father's sermons. He placed it on the writing-table before the window. Here it was in the best possible light. Nevertheless, Susan could scarcely see to do her work, for the lower half of the window was filled up with closely-hanging strings of Algerian beads, which screened it from the gaze of passers-by. The room looked out upon the street, where the opposite row of tall grey houses loomed gloomily. Like many London dining-rooms, it was dark and dreary in the day-time, and Susan was glad of the standard electric lamp which Hornblow put beside her, and turned on for her benefit. She soon settled to work, and, as was her custom, put her whole soul into the task before her. Soon she grew interested in the story. It seemed—or so she fancied—to give her some insight into the authoress's character and life, and she could not forbear, after the fashion of many readers, from conjecturing resemblances between certain situations in the book and such as might possibly have occurred to "Spiridia." At eleven o'clock the footman appeared with a request that she would go up to Mr Ronald. Somewhat regretfully Susan sorted the sheets, laying them in a neat pile, with a paper weight on the top, and followed the man, who led the way upstairs and through the door opposite the drawing-room, into Ronald's sitting-room.

It was the first time that she had been into this room, and it struck her unpleasantly. If Ronald's supposedly enlightened taste found cause for objection in the pseudo Greek art of the First Empire as favoured by his father, his own passion for colour and grotesque adornment was less chaste and certainly less reposeful. As far as the original tones of his walls could be determined they were an odd pinky-yellow vermilion, but there was a frieze of fiery blue scaled dragons—a sort of old temple decoration—below the embossed ceiling, and a dado of books in brilliant leather and gold bindings, leaving but a
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narrow intermediate space, which was filled up with oddments in pottery, metal and framed embroidery. The couch was a low, wide divan, covered with gorgeous cushions. There was an unwholesome scent of sandalwood. An enormous pot of yellow lilies stood upon a carved pedestal in the window, and here and there, were impressionist landscapes, specimens of Königsen's early work. A corner of the room was filled up, studio fashion, with a screen of tissue paper against the window in it, to soften the light, an easel holding an unfinished drawing, and a table with an array of brushes, china palettes with dried-up Indian ink, and various artist's implements. The room had a pleasant outlook over gardens at the back, where a gleam of wintry sunshine was striving to pierce the fog. The trees were leafless, but the spread of lawn and winding walks brought to Susan some faint suggestion of the country and of home.

Ronald himself, small, shrunken, dark-eyed and pale of face, was lying back in a deep chair, with crimson and yellow cushions at his back, a handsome embroidered coverlet across his knees. On the table beside him stood a little tray with a bowl of milk or soup which he had just emptied. He made the slightest possible attempt at a morning greeting, and turned instantly to his mother, who was standing beside him.

"So you're going, mum. Well, I hope the work will progress all the quicker for the extra time you are giving it. Now, Miss— I can't remember your name."

"Pengelley," said Mrs Jacobs, as she left the room.

"I hate long names," grumbled Ronald. "Sit down, please. It always fidgets me to see people standing. Take that book beside you." He pointed a thin finger to a volume of travels in the East which lay on the table close by. "You'll find a marker at the right place. Read on till I tell you to stop"
Doctor Grier

Susan took the book. She was angry at his mode of speech, and was inclined to let him see it, but the boy was sublimely indifferent to his own lack of manners. She found the place without comment and began to read. Her voice was clear and well modulated. She read well, and was not troubled by the nervousness she would naturally have felt had the youth been less insufferably rude. She went on calmly—a distant inflection in her voice which made her seem aloof from everything but the matter in hand. She became interested too. Ronald was a conceited boor, but he had, notwithstanding, a certain amount of literary cultivation, and there was something pathetic in his yearning for foreign adventure and Oriental colouring. Miss Pengelley pleased Ronald. He preferred a machine to serve him—except where his mother was in question—and Susan's voice was soothing. Ronald was always more unbalanced in the mornings. When at length Susan stopped to rest for a moment, after reading many pages, he grunted, in the nearest approach to affability, "You read well."

Susan disdained to reply, and after a minute continued. It apparently never occurred to Ronald that she might get tired. She went steadily on for an hour, and then Hornblow came to fetch his young master downstairs for an airing in a wheeled chair that Ronald usually took in the gardens before luncheon.

To Susan's relief and satisfaction she was not asked to accompany him, though she caught a look in Ronald's face which seemed to indicate that he was debating whether or not he should command her services. Susan, however, beat a hasty retreat.

Then suddenly she remembered the notes she had to answer for "Spiridia." They kept her occupied until luncheon time, when Ronald was brought in from the garden, looking certainly in a more amiable mood. Miss Pengelley found the meal trying, never-
The Other Mrs Jacobs

theless, for Mrs Jacobs and her son were so much to each other that any ordinary third person present must necessarily be left more or less out of the conversation. Susan ate her luncheon, taking but little part in the talk, in which from time to time Mrs Jacobs made perfunctorily polite attempts to include her. It was not of much use. The topics were too new to Susan, and gradually even Mrs Jacobs ceased to pay any heed to her companion.

After luncheon Susan expected to receive further directions for the afternoon, but none seemed forthcoming. Mrs Jacobs, before she had left the table, glanced over the various notes Susan had written, and simply remarking that they were "all right," requested Miss Pengelley to give them to the butler to stamp and post. Then she went away upstairs, her mind evidently full of her own affairs. Ronald, too, with some grumbling and grunting, was conveyed from the dining-room to his own sitting-room for his afternoon rest, and Susan found herself once more alone. The obliging Hornblow had placed The Morning Post at the corner of the writing-table for her edification, and she took it up, and, drawing her chair to the fire, sat down for a few minutes' quiet reading before going on with her work. But Miss Pengelley could not keep her attention on the paper. Her mind went wandering off, and she reflected upon the various aspects of her new life. She knew herself to be unreasonable, yet she began to regret having undertaken the post. She disliked the feeling of having lost her independence, of being at the beck and call of an employer—worse than that, of being brought into contact with young Ronald, for whom she had already conceived something akin to detestation. She foresaw that a considerable part of her duties would consist in reading to, and attending upon, Ronald. She had been prepared to throw herself heart and soul into working for "Spiridia," but her ardour was already chilled.
Doctor Grier

by the sense of coldness and aloofness in the novelist. And if her intercourse with "Spiridia" was to be confined to typing down here in this dreary room and delivering her tale of bricks at the end of the day, Miss Pengelley thought that the occupation would be less congenial than she had anticipated. She had to force herself to remember that she was in receipt of a regular salary, which was a matter of moment to her. It was only natural to suppose that she must render a fair amount of work in return. Therefore it remained for Miss Pengelley to decide how far she was prepared, for the sake of her salary and for the honour and glory of living with "Spiridia," to put up with such small disagreeables as her position would entail upon her. She had half a mind to give up her situation and try for work which would not oblige her to live in the home of her employer. She was honest enough to confess to herself that it was her own silly pride which made her dislike to be an appendage. But, after all, why should she not have her pride and live in a garret if she preferred being queen of that humble abode in off hours to dining as a dependant at a rich man's table?

Miss Pengelley, beneath her demure exterior, had a good deal of character, and though she was quite willing to efface herself at her own discretion when circumstances appeared to demand the sacrifice, she was not prepared to relish the process when performed by other people.

The money she received was again an important consideration, but surely there must be other situations, other kinds of employment, to which she might turn. Susan began to think that the post of companion was not wholly delectable. It seemed to be a sort of no-man's-land, which included all the drawbacks and none of the advantages of any other walk in life. However, she had come to Mrs Jacobs on a month's trial, and it would be wiser, she decided, to see the month through. At the worst, she could
leave when it ended, and if she could continue to remain for a quarter, Mrs Jacobs would probably give her a recommendation elsewhere.

Having made up her mind to this course, Susan went back to the writing-table and her typewriter. She was far too conscientious to waste time which she considered another person had bought, and so set to work with a will, typing in almost an unnecessarily careful way, and thus driving off for the present troublesome thoughts.

So fully occupied was her mind that she paid no attention to the driving up of the carriage and the departure of Mrs Jacobs on her afternoon round, nor to various rings at the door-bell and the ushering up of a visitor to Ronald’s sitting-room, whom she afterwards remembered must be Mr Kæningsen come to look at the boy’s drawings. She had left the door of the room ajar, as it had been placed by the butler after luncheon, and so, as she sat at her work, was in full view of anyone on the staircase. The demure little figure in its neat serge dress had its back turned to the door, and consequently her face could not be seen, but her brown head was visible as she bent assiduously over her work, and she looked the very embodiment of conscientious application. Presently a brougham drove to the door, and a tall, broad-shouldered, grey-headed man alighted. His peculiar, long-drawn ring was answered immediately, for Hornblow knew better than to keep Doctor Grier waiting. On the way upstairs the doctor caught sight of Miss Pengelley.

"Is that the lady who was expected?" he asked bluntly of the butler.

"Yes, sir. Miss Pengelley arrived last evening," replied the deferential Hornblow.

"Half a minute, Hornblow—you can wait for me," was the doctor’s reply, and, turning round, he came down the two or three stairs he had ascended, and advanced with long strides—he was a big man—into the dining-room.
Doctor Grier

Miss Pengelley did not hear his tread on the soft carpet, and was consequently exceedingly astonished when a large, firm hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a gruff, but not unkindly, voice said,—

"Now, young woman, stop that and listen to me."

Susan half turned, too much astonished to speak.

"You're the new importation, aren't you?" went on the doctor, unmoved by her surprise.

"I—I came yesterday," stammered Miss Pengelley, wondering who he was and what he wanted with her.

"Well, I must have a talk to you. I'm just going upstairs to see the young man. I don't suppose I shall be very long, but you stop here, please. Let me find you in this room when I come back. That's all."

Susan was held as in a vice by the pressure of that strong, nervous hand. She had the consciousness of something very powerful hovering over her. The voice, which was slightly Scotch in its accent, went on, and the doctor took away his hand.

"You and I will have to understand each other. There are two or three little points we are going to discuss."

A kind of half smile twitched the doctor's mouth, as Miss Pengelley, released, suddenly faced him, her jaw dropping and her eyes round with amazement.

"My name's Grier—medical attendant, you know. Don't look as though I were going to eat you. I daresay I seem an unmannerly brute, but it's only because I'm a busy man and can't waste my time in beating about the bush. You'll see—we shall get on all right."

He put his hand upon her shoulder again encouragingly for a moment, and the touch sent an astonishing thrill through Susan Pengelley. The doctor moved away, and she gazed after his long, straight figure in its well-cut frock-coat, not knowing whether to laugh or to be indignant. She had found plenty in the
The Other Mrs Jacobs

house since she came to rouse her indignation, and it did not seem altogether surprising that there should be something fresh to do so. Oddly enough, however, she did not resent Doctor Grier's attitude towards her; it piqued her curiosity; but she saw plainly that, whether indignant or not, it would be useless to show it to him as she felt inclined to do to Ronald.

"What a very odd man!" she thought. "And what in the world can he want to talk to me about? I did not come here as a nurse."

Puzzled and perturbed, but not absolutely displeased, Susan remained motionless, thinking over the situation. Her mind was fully alive to the possibilities that it indicated, for evidently Doctor Grier had something serious to say to her, and ever since she had been in the house Susan had felt that there was a great deal she should like to be told. It seemed a strange thing for a stranger to come and talk to her like this. Susan wondered what it would lead to. So far, Doctor Grier had not had any possible opportunity of understanding what sort of person she was, and consequently it was puzzling in the extreme that he should feel inclined to take her into his confidence. She was so interested in her reflections that she forgot how time went, and sat idle, her hands in her lap, looking straight up the staircase, down which the doctor should return. More than half an hour elapsed before he reappeared. When at length he did so, she merely lifted her eyes to greet him, without a word. There was nothing for her to say; it was for him to speak, since he had sought the interview. He closed the door as he came in, and advanced across the room with a grim and rather sardonic smile.

"Well, young woman, you haven't done much since I went up. You'll never get on at this rate, you know."

"I haven't tried to," said Susan, simply. "I have
been thinking about you, and what you wanted to see me for."

"Good. That's a straight answer, at all events. Well, I'll soon enlighten your curiosity."

He pulled forward a chair opposite to Miss Pengelley, who was sitting sideways before her typewriter, and put himself slowly and deliberately into it, eyeing her in a keen way with a pair of very piercing grey eyes, while she, in her turn, was able to study him, which she did freely, feeling that there was no need to consider formalities. His face was impressive; clean shaven, gaunt-featured, with a peculiarly mobile mouth, and a somewhat awe-inspiring determination. The head was covered with short, iron-grey hair, which receded on either side at the forehead, and was set on a long, lean neck. Notwithstanding his roughness of manner, he was clearly a gentleman, and a refined one—as Susan, who was a bit of a palmist, could tell from his well-shaped, sensitive hands, which he held in front of him, the fingers joined in a deliberative manner. He did not speak for quite a minute. Susan gave an awkward laugh.

"Well, Doctor Grier?"

"Well—I was thinking. Now let me recommend you not to waste your time when you are given manuscripts to type. I should say that you are a scrupulous young woman. Your conscience will prick you when you awake to the fact that you're neglecting the work you're required to do. You haven't turned in your chair since I left the room."

"How do you know that?" asked Susan, promptly.

Doctor Grier gave his shoulders an elephantine shrug.

"Because your gown happens to hang in the same folds as when I was here last. Also, the same sheet is in the typewriter, and the pointer hasn't moved an inch."

Susan's light hazel eyes glistened.

"You are very observant."
The Other Mrs Jacobs

“So are you. My profession obliges me to be, and so, I take it, does yours.”

Miss Pengelley nodded. The man understood her. She felt him to be almost congenial. His brusqueness no longer offended. The insignificant little spinster, conventional and colourless though she might appear, had something in her that rose in rapid response to his scrutiny.

“Aren’t you wasting time now in reading me a homily on my work?” said she, demurely.

“No, I’m not. I have my own methods of going about my duties, just as you have about yours. I like a straight eye and a straight answer. I see I can get ’em from you. Well,” he went on, “you’ll have to use your wits here. I’ll wager that you don’t half know what you’ve come for?”

“To perform the duties of a companion—to make myself generally useful,” said Susan, with a twinge of bitterness in her tone.

“A good deal more than that. Any fool can be a companion, speaking generally. Here you’ll need tact, judgment, perception and common sense—which last is the saving grace of all difficulties.”

“Suppose you tell me exactly what is wanted of me,” remarked Susan.

“Just what you can give without particular trouble, but with, I imagine, considerable interest to yourself. You couldn’t fail to be interested in—one of my patients here.” The man had hesitated a second. His voice softened slightly.

“I had better tell you at once that I don’t feel the least interest in Ronald Jacobs,” said Susan, bluntly.

“So I supposed,” was the equally blunt reply. “The boy’s insulted you, no doubt. That goes without saying. There’s nothing gained by taking any notice of the young cub in that respect. But—I conclude you’re interested in his mother?”

“Extremely. I would do anything for Mrs Jacobs
that she would let me, but I'm afraid that wouldn't be much, except my work."

"Wait and see. I can understand that you'll find it difficult at first, but the day may come when she'll want you—badly. Mrs Jacobs is my patient as well as her son, but she's a woman who will never admit that she is not in the most robust health—unless, as was the case last year, sheer physical inability forces her to give in. She has delicate lungs. I should like her to go to the south of France for the winter, but I fear it's impossible. I can't get her away just now."

He paused. Susan heard with astonishment his gruff tone tempered by deep solicitude. It aroused her sympathy still further. She watched him in silence. His rugged brows drew together in a furrow. Suddenly his eyes shot out a piercing gleam.

'You see," he said, as though he expected Miss Pengelley to have taken in everything that was in his mind. "We've got to do the best we can. Now this is a"—he seemed to be searching for an adjective—"a three-cornered household. You may have noticed that?"

Miss Pengelley had, in her quiet way, a shrewd wit. "I should have supposed," she said, "from what I have seen, that Mr Kœnigsen made it four-cornered."

Doctor Grier fired another sharp look at her, by which she thought he measured her perceptive faculty.

"Good! Yes, that's so." He put his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets and stared frankly at Susan. "I don't mind telling you," he said, "that I can't stick that man. I've left him up there just now. He's fiddling at Ronald's sketches. It don't do any harm to either of 'em, nor to the results of the competition, I should say. It amuses Ronald, and at all events it takes something off his mother. But that man—ugh!"
Doctor Grier made an expressive grimace. "I suppose he's got his uses—like other parasites. And he can draw; I'll give him his due. He plays up to Ahasuerus-Jacobs—who's no judge of character, whatever else he may be—for the sake of getting puffs gratis into the newspapers. He plays up to 'Spiridia' because she was the most important girl in St Helga—and he's trotting out St Helga just now, to get all he can out of it. Also because she is—what she is. And he plays up to Ronald to please his mother. But all that's no concern of ours. Now, young woman, you're no fool. D'you take in what I'm driving at? Can you make yourself a sort of buffer, and keep things from bumping up against each other? It mayn't be altogether pleasant or easy, you know, but I've studied you pretty closely during the last ten minutes, and I take it you're a fairly capable young woman, and level-headed. Can you keep your head in an emergency—if there should happen to come an emergency?" He spoke the last words slowly.

"What sort of emergency?" asked Susan. "I didn't expect to be called upon for anything outside of the—ordinary routine. That's not my business."

"When you've lived as long as I have, young woman, you'll know that you're liable to be called upon for anything outside of ordinary routine at any moment. One of the first things you've got to learn in life—if you mean to be of use to anybody—is when to mind your own business and when to mind other people's. As to this job, you'll soon see whether it suits you or not. If it doesn't you can cut it, you know."

He regarded her intently. Susan's shoulders gave a rather impatient twitch.

"I wish you'd tell me what I'm to expect. Do you mean that Ronald's going to die?"

"No, I don't. Not yet, at all events—though it's on the cards that he might, and a good thing too.
His existence is only an irk to himself and everybody besides—even his mother, who dotes on him. No one else could care twopence about him, of course, he's such an insufferable young ass. He wouldn't have been a bad sort of boy properly brought up, but he has been spoiled from his cradle. Mistaken kindness on his mother's part—his infirmity, of course, the chief reason. It's no good considering causes—we've got to deal with results—that's the deuce in life. She has made herself a slave to the boy. He's literally sapping her system. Now there may be trouble before her—of a different kind.”

Again the doctor's voice softened. “She's got to get the strength to stand it in case it comes. Look here, Miss Pengelley—that's your name, isn't it? If you were a fool, I'd suggest to you to pack up and go—you've been considering it, I see. But you're not a fool, and you'll stay.”

“You seem to have come to a definite opinion about me,” said Susan, sharply, but with a pleased smile. “Yes, I shall stay.”

Doctor Grier looked at her with narrowed eyelids—it was a trick he had—focussing upon her for the moment with all his energies.

“Good!” he remarked. “You're no fool—I said so. That's why I'm wasting all this time on you. Understand me, young woman, I don't pay afternoon calls. Now, just give your mind to this—if these people are left to their own devices, they'll hurry each other into their graves. The boy suffers from cerebral trouble—you've noticed he's half paralysed. The chief membranes are affected—you wouldn't know their names if I told you. He gets attacks of blinding pain, when his mother goes nearly mad, and I come in with morphia injections to stop it. But the young scamp merely wants feeding and stimulating—not fussing over. You can do pretty nearly as much for him as I can. Make yourself necessary to him, then snub him if he doesn't behave. He'll learn
The Other Mrs Jacobs

to respect you for it, if he doesn't like you any the better. As for his mother, keep him away from her as much as possible. She's a highly-strung creature, and her nerves aren't good for much any more than her lungs. She's wearing herself out, simply preparing a weapon for her own destruction in that boy. She had an attack of haemorrhage last year from tending him. If she gets another I can't answer for the consequences. D'you take this in?"

"I think so." Susan nodded slowly. "But what can I do?"

"Save her in every way you can. She can't stand strain. Shield her in case of stress or—sudden shock. Fill up chinks. Women like you are born to fill up chinks. And a good thing for the rest of the world that you're there to do it."

Miss Pengelley smiled sadly. The kindliness in the man's tone, however, in spite of its gruffness, robbed the words of their sting.

"Very well. But as to details?"

"They're not my business. You've got to work in details. Keep your eyes open, and stick to the lines I've shown you." He got up and stood, his brows bent in a frown. "I don't say you'll find it easy. It won't be. But someone's wanted here, and, in a sense, even a fool would have been better than no one. That was why I urged Mrs Jacobs to have a companion."

"Then I'm indebted to you for my engagement, am I?" retorted Susan, with a quick sally.

He smiled broadly. Now she noticed how his smile sweetened, and, in a fashion, spiritualised his face. She noticed indelible signs of suffering there, and had a darting suspicion that Doctor Grier's strange roughness and disdain of minor conventionalities might have arisen from the breaking of an illusion. Miss Pengelley's intuition told her that the man who postured as a hard-headed, hard-spoken medical practitioner might be in the depths of him
Doctor Grier

a tender-hearted idealist. If so, it seemed a sin, she thought, to have shattered Doctor Grier's ideals.

The doctor's narrowed eyes were no longer reading Miss Pengelley, but had fixed themselves upon an old silver platter against the carved wall. He was silent for several seconds; then he drew a long breath, and shook himself free from what were evidently disquieting thoughts.

"Come now, young woman, you're on in this job? and we understand each other?"

"I'll do my best," said Susan.

"Common sense diluted with—shall we say, tact? It's a rare combination. Try it. Here's my card. If you want me, send round—Hyde Park Street—I'm close by. But mind, I'm not a fashionable consulting physician; I take my bad cases early, and eleven to two are my hours at home."

"But, doctor," demurred Susan. "How am I to know whether or not you are wanted? I'm not a nurse. And really I can't interfere with Mrs Jacobs's care of her son."

"Stuff!" said the doctor. "I said you weren't a fool. Don't make yourself out one. This is no case for a nurse. If I thought a nurse necessary I'd put one in." He held out his hand, and took Susan's palm in his. "Your business is to see that we don't have a nurse—understand?"

"H'm! Yes, I understand," replied Miss Pengelley, dubiously. "I hope you won't be disappointed in me, Doctor Grier."

"I don't mean to be," he answered, as he left her.
CHAPTER V

A DAUGHTER OF THE SEA

Mrs Jacobs's brougham drove up again just as Miss Pengelley—determined not to let her interview with the doctor unsettle her powers of concentration past mending—was preparing to resume her typewriting. Doctor Grier's coachman, summoned by his master from the opposite direction, pulled round sharply to let Mrs Jacobs's carriage pass. She gave an exclamation of surprise and pleasure as the doctor stepped forward and opened the door for her to get out.

"I didn't expect to see you to-day," she said, holding out her hand. "Nothing is wrong with Ronald? They didn't send for you, did they?"

"No; I merely came to see how things were getting on. He's doing very well. There have been no more attacks of pain?"

"No, thank God!"

The two passed into the house.

"You'll stop and speak to me for a few moments?" said Mrs Jacobs.

She led the way along the hall, through what was evidently Mr Jacobs's smoking-room—the French windows of which gave on to the garden—into a narrower room beside it. This had a small window banked up with flowers, a writing-table at an angle with the window, a fireplace, a couch and one or two chairs. There was also a bookcase filled with unin-
A Daughter of the Sea

interesting reference volumes—directories, Court guides, cookery books, and the like. On the table were a little pile of tradesmen’s books, a sheaf of filed bills, and a packet of photographs with the name of the photographer in large letters upon it. Mrs Jacobs took a chair and motioned Doctor Grier to one opposite.

“I don’t know whether you’ve ever been in here,” she said, noticing his glance round. “It’s where I interview the cook in the morning and transact other domestic business. I’ve been thinking that I ought to give it up to Miss Pengelley for her typewriting.”

“She seems comfortable enough in the dining-room,” said Doctor Grier.

“Have you seen her, then?”

“Yes. I took the liberty of interviewing the young woman on my own account.”

“That was kind of you. And what do you think of her?”

“She’s no fool, as I told her. She’s a loyal soul, I should say. They are rare. You won’t go far wrong in making a friend of her.”

“I find making friends with people difficult,” answered Mrs Jacobs.

“You shouldn’t. People are ready enough to make friends with you.”

“That’s just it.”

“Well! Is it a drawback?”

“I’m ungrateful, I know. People seem so much more interested in me than I am in them.”

“You’re not ungrateful; you’re self-respecting. As a rule, people are sympathetic in proportion with what they can get out of you. By the way, you don’t find it difficult—apparently—to be interested in that painter fellow—Koenigsen.”

“Karl Koenigsen! You see, we were both born on St Helga.”

“So I read somewhere. You inspired the career in which he has been seemingly successful by sitting e 65
The Other Mrs Jacobs

to him for your portrait, which he drew with the pencil of a St Helgan fisherman."

"On the end of a herring barrel! I see you know all about it."

"Yes," returned the doctor, grimly. "I think I know all about it."

"You don't like Karl Koenigsen?" she said.

"Candidly, I don't. But that's of no particular consequence. Mrs Jacobs, you have coughed three times since I've been in the room. Will you permit me to listen to your breathing?"

"Certainly, if you think it advisable. I'm sorry I haven't got a tea-gown on; they're so much more convenient. If you don't mind waiting a moment—"

She moved to the couch at the end of the room and fumbled with the hooks of her bodice. He produced his stethoscope, and waited with professional gravity till she was ready. Then, leaning over her, he placed the end of the instrument against the lace and cambric which covered her chest, and slowly and carefully made his examination, remaining silent a minute or two when it was over and he had replaced his stethoscope in his breast pocket.

"Well?" she asked, looking up with a smile.

"There's no fresh mischief. You'd do all right if only you were careful—didn't go out in the evening and—what is more important—didn't run up and down stairs continually at Master Ronald's beck and call. You should leave that boy to take care of himself. It would be better for him and better for you."

"That's out of the question," she answered decidedly. "So long as my poor boy lives, so long as he needs me, I shall feel it my duty to be at his beck and call, as you put it."

"Like a woman! And where's the sense in it all?" he exclaimed roughly. "Why should your health, which is valuable to a number of persons—your life, perhaps—be sacrificed for the sake of one which—" he shrugged—"is much less worth the saving?"
A Daughter of the Sea

"Oh! Doctor Grier!" she rejoined, deeply hurt.
"I did not think you could be so cruel."
"Yes, I am cruel—I admit it. I'm brutal when it's necessary. I never pretend to be otherwise. Ask your anti-vivisectionists what they think of me. But I'm true to my creed—the martyrdom of the few for the benefit of the many."
"So," she said in a curious tone, with her eyes averted, "if my death, say, would further scientific research one iota, you'd immolate me cheerfully?"
"You!"

The man reared himself, a tall grey pillar, with head bent a little towards her, the thin, flexible lips twitching queerly. He said not another word; but the manner in which he uttered the monosyllable made her turn quickly to him, a questioning look in her eyes. With trembling fingers she readjusted the velvet and lace of her bodice. A little bunch of Parma violets fell out as she did so. Doctor Grier stooped and picked it up, but she noticed that he did not give it back to her. He turned his back upon her deliberately, and, going towards the window, took up the chair he had been sitting in and planted it nearer the couch. When he returned she saw that the violets were no longer in his hand. Her breath came quickly. She was not at ease. Her usually calm manner had deserted her, but the man did not appear conscious of it.

"Well, Mrs Jacobs," he began, in a slow, expressionless tone as he seated himself, "did your husband tell you that he'd been to see me the other day?"
"Lion? No, he said nothing about it. I suppose that he was anxious about Ronald or me. I hope you did not alarm him?"
"No; I did not alarm him about you or Ronald, so I suppose he did not think the visit he paid me worth mentioning."
"I suppose not. But I'm glad you didn't frighten him unnecessarily. I felt just a little uneasy about
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Lion himself last night. He did not seem quite as usual."

"Not quite as usual, eh? What was the matter?"

"He had had a long day in the City. There was something different in his manner—partly excitement, partly depression. I fancied he might not be well. But when Mr Koenigsen came in he cheered him up. I don't suppose there was anything really the matter. Lion has always had such splendid health."

"So he has always had splendid health!" repeated the doctor.

"Always. It is I who have been the weakly, nerve-ridden creature. I who am responsible for everything—everything."

"What do mean by 'everything'? It seems to me that things have gone fairly prosperously with you in a general sense."

"You know that to me everything means the one thing—and that is Ronald. I can never cease from reproaching myself—"

"For what?"

"You know! If I had been happier—more self-controlled—he would not have been as he is."

"Then you were not happy before he was born?" said the doctor, in a low voice.

"How could I be? I had had so much trouble. I—I was miserable. There was a time when I wished to destroy myself."

"You didn't want to marry your husband? It was that which made you miserable?" He spoke in the same repressed way, but there was a faint question in the tone.

She seemed reluctant to speak, but his grey eyes upon her face had almost a mesmeric effect.

"You needn't mind telling me," he said, "though, no doubt, you wouldn't speak of this to—anyone else."

"No, but—you're different."

"Am I different from anyone else to you?"
A Daughter of the Sea

"Ah! Yes." She struggled for composure. "A doctor one regards like one's lawyer or a priest."

"Of course. I'm used to confidences—get some queer ones occasionally. You can trust me."

"I am sure of it. I have often thought—if you had been there then, I should not have felt so friendless."

"Yes," he said quickly. "If I had been there—! Where? And when?"

"It was at Helsingkräad—after the trouble in St Helga. You have heard?"

"You mean the expulsion of the President?"

"Yes. My father was very ill. And he had had great losses. We were almost penniless."

He gave an inarticulate sound which might have meant anything. She had paused, one thin hand pulling feverishly at the laces at her throat. Remembrance was painful to her.

"And so—you got married?" said the doctor.

"Mr Jacobs, who was in business at Helsingkräad, became acquainted with us," she said, speaking rapidly. "He was very kind to my father. We could not help liking him. After a time I found out that—he had paid for things for us. My father wouldn't have lived so long if it hadn't been for him. I knew, too, that he was not rich himself—then. He did not begin to be prosperous till afterwards, when a rich old man took him into partnership. It was before that—that I married him. It was the only thing I could do. He—he had been so very kind."

"And from that day?"

"Oh! from that day he has been tremendously successful. He always says I brought him luck"—with a little laugh. "After my father died we went to Paris. He made one or two good coups there. It was in Paris that he began to collect beautiful things for me. He has always thought so much of me. Ronald was born in Paris."

"Ah! Within a year of your marriage?"
"Yes—oh!" and she shivered. "It is dreadful to look back."
"Why, in Heaven's name, did you marry a man you could not love?"

She was thinking deeply. The question gave her a sudden start.
"You mustn't misunderstand me. It isn't like that now. Lion has been so good to me. I should be inhuman if I did not—care for him. But I think I was not human then."
"Not human!"
"You know the old stories of people who were half fairies—those northern legends of sea-women who yearned for the love of men, and through it to gain an immortal soul, yet who could not, because of their nature, endure to be cribbed in human habitations, and who were always craving for elemental joys. Women who needed an impossible sort of love, great, strong, almost rough, all-embracing—like the sea. Do you follow what I mean?"
"I believe I do."
"Well, it has come to me—sometimes when I have been writing, sometimes in waking dreams—that there is a Divine Fount which is Love itself—the Fount of true life, from which we all, according to the degree in which we love, may draw sustenance."
"A fine idea—if it would work."
"In that case, if the true selves of us were in connection with that Fount of love and life, no mistakes in marriage could ever be made. Each union of bodies would be a sacrament, each soul brought into the world a re-consecration."
"Yes, yes, go on."
"Oh! I've nothing more to say, and I must be boring you. I don't know what tempted me to speak of such things. They are my fancies. Writers are privileged to be imaginative. And I'm not quite like other women."
"That's true. But it's of yourself I want to hear. This love that is strong—cruel perhaps through realising its strength, but all-embracing—you could trust yourself to a love like that?"

"I used to think so. It's the northern blood in me, perhaps, longing for the sea. I've always identified the sea with a love like that. In my dreams—my real dreams—I sometimes seem to be floating away on a huge, powerful, briny wave—a wave that's like strong cradling arms which would never let one go."

"Your real dreams, you say—what is the difference?"

"There's a difference. Those dreams belong to the self of me which just—longs for the sea."

"And for the love that is like the sea?"

She made no answer, but his gaze drew hers. The blue eyes that had a tinge of green in them in some lights—like the sea, he thought—slowly met his piercing grey ones, and the looks blended, so that his softened in a wonderful way and hers gleamed with a spark of fire. Neither spoke for several seconds. At length she gave a long sigh like that which preludes the awakening from a magnetic trance; and as he withdrew his gaze, she stared round her in a childish half-conscious manner.

"The self of you here doesn't want the sea, at all events," he said harshly. "It is quite content with driving about in a brougham or victoria, and in receiving visitors and going to shows and parties."

"That's not the real self." She laughed softly. "It's strange to be two persons, isn't it? I can separate the two me's quite easily now—except sometimes when I am writing—it's one of the reasons why I don't much care to write about St Helga. But at the beginning, they were always tearing at each other."

"And that helped to make you miserable?"

"Very likely. But if I thought in the right way
about the child who was coming, I should have tried to be different. I did not want to bring a child into the world, but I did not realise that the child itself would be the expression of my spiritual revolt—my secret aversion. It was an unreasoning aversion, for I had nothing to complain of—you understand that? Now I know that it was the soul of me which revolted. My poor Ronald was the victim of that outrage on Nature. Then, when you talk about the sacrifice of the few for the sake of the many, and I think of that one life, for which I would gladly give my own any day, it seems horrible that Nature should revenge herself through the maternal instinct, which is stronger in me than anything else. Doctor Grier, it is partly your doing."

"My doing!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, for it is only since I have known you that I have reasoned out things to myself and hated myself because of them."

"There is no need to hate yourself," he said gently. "That is a mistake. I have taught you something, it seems, but not enough. You should have waited—you should have stayed beside your northern sea till the great wave came for you and swept you away upon its breast to the mysterious fount you speak of."

"It would have been beautiful," she murmured, "beautiful." Leaning back on her cushions, she half covered her face with her hands as though to shut out the vision. He put out his own hand and touched one of hers.

"Tell me this," he said, "if I may ask it. Did that love ever take shape? Was there ever anyone for whom you cared, beside that northern sea?"

She dropped her hands upon her lap, and the blue-green eyes looked at him with the frank gaze of a child.

"Before I was married? No, there was no one. My sea-lover has existed only in dreams. No one has ever understood that part of me."
A Daughter of the Sea

"I understand it."

"Perhaps. I think you do." She stirred uneasily. The frank eyes dropped. A flush rose slowly over the pale proud face. "Spiridia" was not the ice-cold conventional woman of the world now. She looked very human, very adorable, Miss Pengelley would have thought. And the grim grey face of the man regarding her was like a lava crust concealing volcanic fires.

Suddenly she asked,—

"You have no children?"

"No, I have to thank Heaven for that mercy."

"You are married, I know—though I only heard it a few days ago. Karl Koenigsen told me."

"Yes, I'm married. I've been married a good many years now—almost as long as you have."

"Karl says she is very handsome," said Helga, tentatively, in a girlish way. It was a feminine touch that evoked a slight smile from Doctor Grier.

"She is handsome," he admitted.

"Karl has painted her, he tells me. I must have seen the portrait. I wish I had known whose it was." There was no answer. "But I shall see her herself, on Friday. You will both be at his reception, I hear. I hope we shall get to know each other. I'll ask Karl to introduce me."

"Please, don't. I'd rather you didn't know my wife."

Helga stared at him again with her clear eyes.

"Oh! But why?"

"I'd rather you didn't. In the first place, you wouldn't get on together. But there are several reasons why I'd rather you did not know my wife. For one thing, she was born in a different position of life from you."

"That wouldn't matter in the least."

"She was married when I knew her first to some sort of tradesman. I understood that her husband had practically deserted her."
"He must have been a very bad man."
"I daresay. Most men are bad. He'd married her on impulse, I believe, and very soon ceased to care for her."
"But that wasn't the case with you? You loved her?"
"I thought so, which comes to the same thing at the time. But I'm afraid my marriage wasn't in accord with the Divine Fount you mentioned just now."

Helga drew a deep breath. Her eyes shone softly.
"I'm sorry," she said. "So it was perhaps like mine—something of a mistake."
He nodded.
"But I don't see why I shouldn't know her—especially as she is going to be at Mr Koenigsen's."
"If you were anybody else, I could not tell you anything about my wife. But I'd like you to know. As things are, perhaps you ought to know. At all events the story's safe enough in your keeping."
"Have I not trusted you?" was Helga's sole response. She watched him eagerly. He hesitated somewhat still, and his face grew greyer and more grim.
"The cases are totally different. To begin with, my early relations with my wife were not legitimate. I told you she was married. I was young, and rising in my profession. Such a scandal as a divorce case would have ruined my career. The simpler course was to arrange so that her husband should believe her dead. It happened that circumstances played into my hands. She went into a hospital where I was house physician. It was supposed that she had died under an operation. I need not go into further particulars of the fraud—though it might, no doubt, afford you adaptable 'copy.' Looking back now, it seems incredible that I should have concocted and carried through such a plot. A good many queer things have happened in my life. One of the
strangest is the way in which Fate has abetted my own headstrong will. One might almost fancy that Will is in itself of the nature of Godhead. Over and over again it has only been necessary for me to exert sufficient determination, and—no matter how difficult the object to be achieved—something—accident—coincidence—an unexpected human agency, has stepped in and enabled me to accomplish my end. Now I am sometimes afraid to resolve, lest I should be cursed with a wish fulfilled."

He spoke bitterly. Mrs Jacobs was listening with the deepest attention.

"I'm regularly poaching on your preserves," he said, with a short laugh. "It's a three-volume novel, isn't it?"

"Please go on," she said simply.

"There isn't much more. I gave up the appointment a little later, and started private practice. Some time afterwards she told me that she had learned that her husband was dead. Of course I married her, and that's all."

He got up before Helga had time to make any comment upon his story, saying abruptly, "I've wasted far too much time. This wasn't what I came for. But it's better that I shouldn't have done what I had in my mind. Good-bye, Mrs Jacobs."

"Stop! stop!" she exclaimed eagerly. "What was it you intended to do?"

"Something that will bear keeping," he replied evasively. "I've told Miss Pengelley to send for me if—anything should happen."

"What should happen? You don't anticipate disaster? Ron is doing well," she asked anxiously.

"Oh, yes, the boy's all right. I was thinking of you rather than of Ron. But you'll do for the present, I should say. Take care of yourself—if you can. Good-bye."

He shook hands. She had got up, and was standing by the writing-table. The anxious look had
passed from her face. It lightened again as he smiled at her—a smile few people ever saw. She seemed girlishly desirous to detain him, yet scarcely knowing how to do so. Her eye fell upon the packet of photographs.

"Oh, I see these have come. You must tell me what you think of them." She opened the covering. He could not resist the temptation, and lingered, examining the cabinet portrait she handed him. It was a half-length.

"I like this," he said.

Something in his face made her ask shyly, "Would you—do you think you would care to have one?"

"I should care very much," he answered.

"I'll sign it—shall I?" She held the pen poised.

"Is it to be 'Spiridia'? No, I rather be Ron's mother to you."

She wrote "Helga Jacobs" across the corner of the photograph, and held it to the fire to dry. Then she gave it to him.

"You want an envelope. I'm afraid I haven't one large enough. This will do," and she slipped it between a sheet of notepaper, securing it with an india-rubber band.

He put it into his breast pocket, and, with a gruff "Thank you," turned out of the room.
CHAPTER VI

CLARICE

Doctor Grier was late in getting home that evening. He was too conscientious to curtail his visits to his other patients because his interviews had been lengthy with Miss Pengelley and Mrs Jacobs. The delay caused him no particular regret, beyond the fact that it made him hungry. And even so, dinner was not to him the important matter that it is to most men. He ate to live; he did not live to eat. Indeed, he was wont to say of himself that he had no interests outside his profession. He worked three-fourths of the twenty-four hours, never sparing any effort in the performance of his medical duties.

It was long past nine when he reached his house in Hyde Park Street. The door of a small room—a secondary waiting-room opposite the dining-room, where Doctor Grier's patients congregated during consulting hours—opened abruptly as he let himself into the hall. He was confronted by a small, but extremely pretty, woman, who stood full under the flash of the electric light. She looked cross but nevertheless brilliant. It would have been difficult to guess her age, or how much of her beauty was due to art. Clarice Grier knew how to make the best of herself. She employed a masseuse to keep down stoutness, and to promote the flow of her already vivacious blood, and she was a lucrative client to beauty specialists. Yet by nature she had a skin of milk and roses, daring dark eyes, and arched brows, a red mutinous mouth, and a quantity of wavy dark
hair, which was elaborately dressed. Her tea-jacket, cut open at the throat, was like a crinkly scarlet poppy, and upon it a diamond and ruby beetle fastened to her left shoulder seemed to be crawling. She was an effective little figure, and though certainly nearing middle life could be enchanting enough when she chose. She seldom troubled to employ her charms upon her husband, however, and he had become indifferent to them.

"Well, I think you might have managed to come in sooner," she said. "You knew I was going to be by myself this evening."

"That was your own fault, surely," said he, with an effort at geniality. "I am delighted that you should see your friends."

"Oh, yes—to get me off your hands. I know all about that. At the same time, you object to most of the amusing people I ask to the house."

"Fifth-rate actors and actresses, and slimy parasites who'd sell their souls for the run of my cellar and a good dinner. All right. I, too, know all about that. We've pretty well exhausted the Koenigsen question and others." He was rapidly opening and glancing at the letters which had been piled upon a table in the little square hall. "Though you might have had that ass of a painter. No, he's not an ass; I withdraw that epithet—that beast of a painter—if you'd like. Only I do object to paying for a portrait of you, and having it worked out as well in wine and cigars; we'll throw in the dinners."

"If it comes to that," said Clarice, casting a long, searching glance at the doctor, who was reading his letters, and took no notice of her, "there are plenty of people only too glad to dine and wine Karl Koenigsen. He doesn't need patronage nowadays. Besides," she added, with a sort of tentative defiance, "he dines and lunches me"—she was going to say "often enough," but changed it to "occasionally."

"He's welcome, and so are you. He naturally
Clarice finds it advisable to do his share—somehow. As long as I’m not bored with him I don’t care.”

“You’re going to his show on Friday?” she said sharply.

“That idiotic evening reception at his St Helgan Gallery—dress toggery, and the rest of it, with seedy specimens of the Peerage on exhibition! Yes, I am going. I told you I’d take you—since you’re always complaining that the world doesn’t know that you’ve got a husband. Now, for goodness’ sake, let me have my dinner, and stop worrying. Where’s Pingpongo?”

“Little beast! He’s shut up in the consulting-room. And I’d better tell you, Andrew, that if you want company during dinner you’ll choose between mine and Pingpongo’s. Which is it to be?—before I go into the dining-room.”

“I should be ungallant to show preference for the society of a monkey,” said Doctor Grier. “Come, Clarice. Pingpongo and I will eat our nuts together in my study after the fashion of primitive man.”

He pushed open the dining-room door, switched on the light, and then rang the bell. It was a large room, severely but handsomely furnished, with good proof engravings and some rather fine bronzes. One end only of the table was laid, the other half was still cumbered with the books and papers supplied for the amusement of waiting patients. A big presentation bowl of silver, containing yellow chrysanthemums, and some small ferns in pots, made a division in the middle of the table. On the white cloth were four other vases of glass, holding flowers. The table equipments were dainty. It appeared that Doctor Grier was a man of means.

“I had my dinner more than an hour ago,” remarked Clarice, subsiding, a crimson and black heap, into an armchair by the fire, and stretching out a high-heeled shoe and several inches of lace.
The Other Mrs Jacobs

stocking from under the frilleries of her red silk petticoat.

"So I should suppose," said Doctor Grier, dryly. There was a copper heating apparatus on the sideboard, with a spirit lamp underneath, and on it various dishes. He solemnly lifted the cover of each in turn, and then looked up straight into the face of an elderly man-servant who just appeared. "Inquire, if you please, whether there is an uncooked chop or steak in the house, or any wholesome cold meat?" he said in a voice of thunder.

"Why?" asked Mrs Grier. "Aren't the things hot? I told them to keep the lamp lighted."

"Very much too hot, thank you. Dried to a cinder."

"Well, you should have come in earlier," said Mrs Grier, easily. "You can't expect a cook to stand such late hours. She told me as much the other day. I'm expecting her to give notice every morning." Doctor Grier made no answer, but took his seat at the end of the table, pouring himself out a glass of whisky and potash water. He waited in grim silence. "I declare, Andrew, you may consider yourself lucky to have any dinner at all," went on Mrs Grier, pettishly. "If I didn't slave myself and propitiate the powers that be with a pleasant word and a holiday treat now and again we should never get a cook to stay with us. They don't like doctors' houses, and I'm not surprised at it. Dinners to be cooked at all hours, and no consideration whatever! I sha'n't dare to go downstairs to-morrow morning."

"Oh! Good Lord! Then I'll settle the matter for you," exclaimed the doctor.

The servant entered at the moment with a smoking bowl of soup. "Cook has a chop on the gridiron, sir, and wishes to know whether that will be sufficient."

"No," replied the doctor. He put his elbows on
Clarice

the table, joined his fingers together, and fixed the man with his piercing grey eyes, while he spoke with slowness and force. "I wish, Johnson, to bring to your notice a fact to which I, in the exercise of my profession, am compelled to pay attention. Brain work, Johnson, is an exhausting process. Perhaps you are not aware of that?"

"No, sir—Yes, sir."

"A man who has fasted for eight hours, working his brain continually during the time, is not going to be satisfied with a twice-cooked and dried-up mess like that. Put down on the order-sheet that when I am not home by a quarter past eight nothing is to be kept hot for me, but that two dishes, not counting soup, are to be specially and freshly cooked, ready for half-past nine."

"Yes, sir."

"I have repeatedly given this order," went on Doctor Grier, "and it has not been attended to. Understand—if I have to repeat it again the cook leaves the house next morning."

"Yes, sir."

Mrs Grier gave a hysterical, rather scornful, laugh. Doctor Grier, about to begin his soup, stopped the man at the door.

"Johnson!"

"Yes, sir."

"You and the cook will each have five pounds added to your yearly wages to reimburse you for the inconvenience I am occasioning you. If you don't like these terms, you can either, or both, go."

"Yes, sir. Thank you sir."

He went out. Mrs Grier got up from her chair by the fire and came to the table, her dark head rearing itself with a suggestion of an irritated snake above the poppy red of her jacket.

"And, pray, what reimbursement am I to get for the inconvenience and the humiliation you are occasioning me?"
The Other Mrs Jacobs

Doctor Grier looked at her, and his nervous mouth twisted itself into an untranslatable expression; it might have been contempt, it might have been compunction. His eye was caught by the ruby and diamond beetle on her bodice.

"Who gave you that?" he asked suddenly.

Clarice seemed for a second taken aback by the abruptness of his question. She flushed, and her eyes dropped. But they fronted him again in an instant.

"I don't choose to render you an account, either of the things I buy or that are given to me."

Doctor Grier shrugged his shoulders.

"Whether you do so or not does not matter—perhaps. It all depends upon the giver. There's a considerable difference, remember, between buying a thing and receiving it as a present in the way you don't care to acknowledge. However, we need not argue the point just now. You should have a toad to match that crawling thing on the other side. I'll see what I can do."

He dived in his pockets, bringing out his stethoscope and a miscellaneous heap of papers and small articles. Among them was the cabinet photograph that Helga had given him in its covering, which was torn a little, held by an india-rubber band, and stuck inside the band at the back of the picture the tiny bunch of faded violets. He noticed the photograph and the violets instantly, and would have withdrawn the packet, but that would be to at once challenge Mrs Grier's attention. He laid the heap, with a small case containing surgical instruments, on the table at his elbow while he searched for some fees paid that day, which he had a habit of thrusting promiscuously anywhere about his person. At that moment Johnson entered, and Mrs Grier pushed away the contents of the doctor's pockets to make room for the chop and a dish of savoury macaroni which he set down before his master. Doctor Grier
Clarice waited till the man had gone, then flung on the table a little heap of sovereigns. He counted out fifteen, and pushed them across to her.

"Will that condone the insult? I think you can get a small toad that I saw at Streeter's the other day for the amount."

She took the sovereigns, at first eagerly, then, with them in her hand, seemed to hesitate before dropping them into a gilt reticule that dangled from a chain at her waist. She made a sudden movement as though she would have flung them in his face.

"Good heavens, Andrew! You make me hate you."

"Why? It's not so many years ago that you used to reproach me for spending my money on instruments and experiments instead of buying you diamonds with it. I've endeavoured since my practice increased to repair the omission."

"Why!" she repeated passionately. "Do you think it's only diamonds that a woman wants of a man? Do you think I don't read the meaning of your sarcastic face, your indifference and neglect, your brutality! You are tired of me, Andrew—sick of me—though I'm better looking if anything than I was seventeen years ago. Your fancy for me is dead—dead—as Clarice Jacobs was supposed to be." She laughed again in hysterical anger. There was nothing of disappointed affection in her emotion, and he knew it. She was merely indignant that she could be of so little account.

He took no notice of her outburst, but went on doggedly eating his chop, and in the intervals dropping the macaroni into his mouth, Italian fashion.

"Johnson cooked this," he said. "Learned the knack at a restaurant in Leicester Square. Faithful Johnson! I've no doubt he prepared it for his own supper. It's cheap at an extra five pounds a year."

"Andrew, will you answer me? Aren't you sorry you married me?"
"It's unfortunate," he said, utterly exasperated, "that I am unable to make a bargain with you on the same sort of terms as with the cook."

"Oh! you can't tell me to go, if that's what you mean," she exclaimed. "You can't pack me out of your house, however much you may wish it—at any rate till I choose to depart."

"Then, in Heaven's name, Clarice, tell me what your price is for holding your tongue while a hard-worked man is eating his dinner. How much more will do it?" He made a gesture as if to search his pockets again. "I'm afraid I must wait till tomorrow," he added. "I haven't enough about me."

"You insult me!" she cried.

"Oh, I've done that so often, according to you. Come, Clarice, you're no chicken—though I'm bound to say you don't look more than twenty-five, and I'm certainly long past all that nonsense. Drop it. We've lived together nearly eighteen years, and have quarrelled furiously certainly during fifteen of them. It gets monotonous. Can't you make yourself happy in your own way, and let me go mine in peace?"

"Thank you. Don't forget that you've given me permission to amuse myself as I please, and don't be surprised if I take it—that's all. As for you yourself—I'm not a fool, Andrew. A doctor has rare opportunities, you know."

Doctor Grier's eyes flashed fire. He pushed his plate away and half rose.

"Will you have some quince jelly? That hasn't been spoiled by keeping," she said sweetly.

"No, thank you. I'll take the nuts, and retire to Pingpongo. Your arm is on those papers of mine. Allow me, please."

She moved her arm, and with her pretty dimpled hand, which twinkled with many rings, she turned over the pile in a manner which was peculiarly irritating to him. But he forbore stiffly. Suddenly
Clarice

she pounced upon the cabinet photograph, with its circling rubber band, from which the scanty wrapper slipped as she lifted it. So also did the violets.

"A photograph!" she exclaimed. "And of a woman! Oh, this is just what I suspected. He carries it in his breast! Now, my highly moral Andrew, what have you to say to this?"

She held up the picture, tearing down the paper covering so that she could see the face. Doctor Grier made an involuntary movement of his arm, as though to rescue the picture from her grasp, but she held it tantalisingly away from him.

"Give it to me, please. The picture is of nobody that you know."

"I see that. But it is of somebody that you know—and very intimately, since you carry it about with you, to gaze upon in the intervals of your round."

"You are mistaken," he said coldly. "That photograph was given to me this afternoon."

"Who is she?" asked Clarice, in her most vixenish way. She was still tantalising him, as a naughty child might, by holding the picture beyond his reach.

"The mother of one of my patients."

"And something else!" she added, with sudden uncontrolled passion. "This is the woman you love. I know it. I have guessed for months that there was somebody, and now your face tells me the truth. Oh! you think yourself a man of iron, Andrew Grier, but I know a certain expression in your eyes—a particular note in your voice. Remember that once you were madly in love with me—that once you ran a foolhardy risk for my sake. Are you going to run the same risk for her sake? Do you mean to risk a divorce suit this time, or will you contrive to get her into a hospital, and pretend that she's dead, and then take her away and start life afresh as a respectably married physician? But you've got me to reckon with this time, and I don't intend to be shunted—"
The Other Mrs Jacobs

unless I do it of my own accord, to benefit myself.”

There was a note of intention at the back of her last words, and Grier looked at her sharply, but she was on guard at the instant. Her eyes dropped from his face to the photograph. They were those rather prominent, short-sighted eyes, which have their own fascination. And now they spied a name written by a broad pen across the light film at the corner of the photograph, which in her excitement she had not observed before. The name seemed to startle and attract her. She peered closely at it, unable to decipher all the letters; then held it nearer under the light, and put up a gold pince-nez which hung upon the same chain as her little reticule.

“Helga Jacobs!” She pronounced the name slowly, and, dropping the picture on the table, turned upon him almost tragically.

“Who is Helga Jacobs?”

“She is Mrs Jacobs, wife of an advertising agent, well known in London.”

“An advertising agent!” she repeated. “I have not heard of him.”

“That is not unlikely,” replied Doctor Grier. “You are neither a tradesman nor a budding celebrity.”

“It seems strange that I should not have heard,” she faltered.

He was surprised at her obvious discomposure. Then he laughed cynically.

“It is strange,” he retorted, “that your friend Koenigsen has not enlightened you as to the firm of Ahasuerus-Jacobs, which has considerably furthered his professional advancement. I am given to understand that it makes a specialty of what are called ‘preliminary puffs.’”

“Oh!” The expression of Mrs Grier’s face changed completely. She looked relieved. “Ahasuerus-Jacobs! Is that the firm? I don’t think I ever
Clarice

heard of anybody who was called Ahasuerus—except the man in the Bible. I—well, I’ll confess, Andrew, that for a moment I was taken aback. Old associations, you know. Perhaps that isn’t odd—altogether. Doesn’t it strike you as a curious coincidence that your life should be influenced—at such a long interval—by two women of the married name of Jacobs?"

He preferred to ignore the inference.

"Jacobs is a common enough name," he said.

"Jacobs—yes. Ahasuerus isn’t common. I’m glad it’s Ahasuerus."

"What on earth do you mean, Clarice? The man you’re thinking of is dead—or else—"

"Or else I shouldn’t be the lawful Mrs Grier, as of course she is the lawful Mrs Ahasuerus-Jacobs. You needn’t disturb yourself, Andrew. We’re both tied and bound—she and I. A pity, isn’t it? I’d go on carrying about her photograph in my breast pocket, if I were you. And the violets—did she give them to you, or did you steal them?" She snatched up the drooping flowers, while Grier ground his teeth to check the oath that rose to his lips.

"I don’t think I shall let you have these," and Clarice tossed the faded bunch into the fire, where they sizzled on the coals, while Grier looked on grimly. Then she flung him the photograph. "I won’t deprive you of that treasure. And I promise not to be jealous of the other Mrs Jacobs. She’s quite a different type from me—a sort of stained-glass, mediaeval person. No doubt you find her soothing."

Clarice moved away from the table, while Grier with difficulty suppressed his rage. His wife stood between the glow of the electric lamp and the fire, a brilliant little figure with her gleaming eyes, her flushed cheeks and scarlet lips. Most men would have admired her, but Grier had grown blind to her attractions, and had never detested her more than at
that moment. He was saved the necessity of speech by a funny little screech at the door, and a sound of gentle scratching.

"Mercy!" cried Clarice. "That fool Johnson has let out the little beast. He'll ruin the paint. Open the door, Andrew. It's that abominable monkey of yours."

She waited while her husband crossed the room and flung open the door. Outside, a small grey monkey, clad in a neatly-braided suit, was cowering, a picture of eager anticipation. At sight of his master the creature sprang forward, and, clambering up Doctor Grier's leg, nestled against his shoulder. The doctor held him closely, and with one hand mechanically stroked the little head. His wife looked at the monkey with an expression of disgust, and from the monkey to the big grey man whom she knew she had temporarily subdued. It was an instance of the everlasting ascendancy of the physically inferior female over the male brute, so bombastic on occasion, but a bubble pricked when the nagging feminine chooses to assert itself. Some such thought crossed Doctor Grier's mind, and he gave a sardonic laugh as he hugged his monkey to his breast. They were a poor match for Clarice—these two; though, in her own way, she was but a mischievous monkey herself—a creature without morality, without affection, without honour, and being such an one, by necessity of the universal order of things—successful. The glittering red and black figure, making a clatter and a flash of trinkets and high-heeled shoes, walked to the door.

"Good-night, Andrew. Since Pingpongo has arrived it is time for me to retire. I leave you to your monkey, and to your midnight meditations."
CHAPTER VII

PINGPONGO

Doctor Grier walked off presently, with Pingpongo on his shoulder, a plate of nuts in one hand and his papers and instruments in the other, to his private room at the back of the house. Here he saw his patients in the morning, endeavouring to cure the ills of others, and here at night he was wont to face his own.

It was a pleasant room, square and rather small, two sides lined with bookcases which had cupboards below them, one end occupied by an old dresser, the back of which was stacked with photographs of patients and friends of his professional life. He was apt, when he entered the room, to give a glance of kindly recognition at the many faces which greeted him. It was refreshing when he came in alone, tired and dispirited, to see there the friends which did not fail him—men of science who had done much to help the world, and whose example and sympathy had been, perhaps, his own keenest incentive to progress; delicate women and little children who had grown strong under his fostering care; and, sprinkled among the rest, rougher portraits of humbler patients, many of whom owed a new lease of life to the clever, gruff, but kindly doctor.

He laid down the things he had brought in, and detached from the pile the portrait of Helga Jacobs. He looked at it for several minutes before he put it away in a drawer. It was a pretty picture, the head
The Other Mrs Jacobs

drooping slightly, the fair hair loosely knotted with a twist of velvet ribbon above the broad, thoughtful brow, the candid eyes, which had often seemed to him so like the sea, with something of the sea's restlessness troubling their depths, gazing at him with the childlike look he knew so well. Doctor Grier gave an involuntary exclamation, half laugh, half groan, as he put the picture away, determinedly closing a drawer upon it. Then he drew a chair to the fire, and, with Pingpongo nestling against his arm, proceeded to light his pipe. Afterwards he cracked nuts, eagerly watched by the monkey as he threw the shells into the fire, and heaped up the kernels in preparation for Pingpongo's feast. Pingpongo, a well-brought-up monkey, who waited the signal for dining, leaped down at the first nut thrown him to his own footstool in front of the fire, where he squatted grotesquely nibbling, while his master discoursed after his custom during their evening tête-à-tête.

"A bad business, Pingpongo—a damned bad business! But you and I have got to work through it, straight and square. We'll try no tricks this time, Pingpongo. We're not going to make fools of ourselves again. And we won't be the other thing—not if we know it. There!"

He threw another nut to the monkey, who caught it adroitly, regarded it earnestly as he held it in his skinny claw, and then he looked up quizically at his master, as if to say, "While there are nuts we have something left to live for."

Grier smiled in spite of himself, and the man's face broke up like the cracking of a mask. Pingpongo was a comical little creature, full of understanding, and with a great capacity for enjoyment, which in his little life had found small scope.

"What a chap you are, Pingpongo! Philosophical as usual. Well, one can't feel oneself absolutely desolate when one has a pal like you to show one
what the love principle is like—down at the lower end of creation, at all events. She was quite right, Pingpongo, when she spoke of that Divine Fount, though it seems a bit out of our line, doesn't it?"

The monkey appeared to comprehend. He chatted knowingly. Doctor Grier leant forward with an affectation of listening to him. It was part of the play that the pair went through every night.

"I'd give something to have reached your philosophical standpoint, Pingpongo. Nuts and a cosy corner—eh? What more could man or monkey desire? But I'd like to have your opinion on the sex question, anyhow, my friend. I don't think we've ever discussed it before—not quite so directly—that is, as we're called upon to feel it just now. You see the sex element dominates evolution, Pingpongo—you can't deny that. There's no getting away from it, try as we will. We can't get away from the individualism of it—the pair tending to unity. What do you think about it, old fellow? Did you, in prehistoric ages, spring into being alongside a she-monkey, whose tendency was to mate with you—whether you happened to wish it or not—through the eons, till you both gain together a rung of the evolutionary ladder. The law of dualism is universal, Pingpongo, and it upsets all materialistic theories. Night and Day! Sun and Moon! Male and Female! It works through the whole order of things. But the meaning of it is a nut too hard for you or me to crack, my boy. All the same, you might tell me, Pingpongo, if you know, whether there's a she-monkey anywhere in the universe, climbing the evolutionary ladder in due ratio with your progress—a rung or two behind or before, maybe; but the two of you bound to pick up with each other at last. If there is, I'm uncommonly sorry for you in the early stages of your acquaintanceship. Later on, no doubt, you'll mature into a sort of sublime coalition."

The monkey grinned, showing its sharp white
The Other Mrs Jacobs
teeth as it chewed the nuts Doctor Grier threw it from time to time. All the while it watched the doctor with the deepest interest, though a good deal of it was centred in the diminishing pile of nuts, but which, nevertheless, was not wholly selfish. It led a lonely life, this poor little scrap of creation, for there was a rooted antipathy between the monkey and Mrs Grier; and the women-servants, following their mistress's example, treated the monkey with scant kindness. Only Johnson, the man-servant, who had held his post for many years, and wished to stand well in his master's estimation, extended to Ping-pongo a time-serving consideration. Pingpongo felt himself painfully neglected during the consultation hours, when he was banished from Doctor Grier's study, lest he should create disturbance and divert attention from medical matters in hand. This was due to an unfortunate occurrence. Pingpongo had been permitted to play about in the waiting-room, offering amusement to waiting patients collected there, till one day a mischievous boy teased him, and Pingpongo, in self-defence, had made a grab at the boy's hand. The boy screamed. Johnson appeared on the scene. Complaints were made, and henceforth Pingpongo was banished to the back yard, which was planted with geraniums in the summer, and to a dark den on the half landing where, during the winter, he spent much of his days. Pingpongo regarded that cupboard much as the British might have regarded the Black Hole of Calcutta in the days of Clive. Yet this black hole of Pingpongo's had its own advantages. There he was at least free from cuffs and kicks and opprobrious epithets, wounding to his sensitive nature.

There was but one person in the world whom Pingpongo loved, and that was the man who had saved his life in a vivisection-room, an incident that neither man nor monkey ever forgot. Whenever the little creature crept now into his arms and
rested there, Grier recollected the first occasion upon which he had done so, when the monkey was chosen to endure torture in the inquisition chamber, as the victim of a brain experiment. Then, after a fierce struggle, it had sprung with one wild leap to Doctor Grier's breast, and had clung to him with the tenacity of a creature knowing its life was at stake. As a humane man, from the ordinary point of view, Grier hated vivisection. Yet as a man of science—and a very large part of Doctor Grier's personality had become simply the man of science, dead to all other considerations—he regarded vivisection as a natural and legitimate road to knowledge. On this occasion, however, the humane instinct had dominated him, quickened by the pathetic terror of the small creature that appealed to his protection. His whole being revolted from the sacrifice, and, in the face of opposition and derision, he had bargained for its life. Henceforward, Pingpongo—as he called the monkey—became the devoted slave of his saviour.

The nuts consumed, they now sat together on the wide, softly padded leather chair facing the fire, Grier smoking, and the monkey watching with a reflective air the clouds of blue smoke that were puffed from the pipe. If Pingpongo could have talked, Grier would have argued out vexed questions seriously with him, for the man yearned sometimes for a companion who would share the burden of his soul. But there was no one. He had never had a companion, save occasionally some man friend. Clarice at her zenith was merely a bright tropical creature, flitting from flower to flower, sunning herself in whatsoever pleased her best. He knew her to be heartless and selfish; he shivered as he considered that she was now in all probability calmly settling to sleep upstairs, without a qualm for the disturbance she had caused or any thought of what his feelings might be. A strong distaste seized him as his mind went back to the one mad act of his youth, so hastily
The Other Mrs Jacobs

resolved upon, and carried through in defiance of the better part of his nature—later, so bitterly repented of. Oh! to be five-and-twenty again, with fetters still unforged!

Yet, as he was honest with himself, he decided that, if he could only put the clock back, without count of the experience years had brought, he would probably act just in the same way over again. Looking back through the telescope of time Grier admitted this, for he had found Clarice Jacobs at nineteen exceedingly fascinating. It was a pity that the fascination had worn off with intimate acquaintance. The story he had so briefly sketched to Helga Jacobs had been substantially correct. Memory retraced the years again now, to the day when Clarice had come to him, hysterical, clinging, and bewitchingly pretty, with the information that she said she had just received of the death of her husband, Jacobs. Their child was coming, and Grier's first thought had been to marry her at once. There was no hesitation in his mind, for she had not then lost her charm for him; though had she done so, it is doubtful if it would have made any difference in his action. He asked no questions, but took her to a registry office. The child had died three weeks after its birth, and there had never been another, for which he was devoutly thankful; but at least, he thought, it was buried with a legal right to the name inscribed on its tombstone.

The commercial traveller—that was what she told him that her husband was—had chosen a fitting opportunity for the time of his departure from this world. So Clarice—offspring of a French cocotte, though born in London—father unknown, supposed widow of one Jonah Jacobs, defunct, became Andrew Grier's wife.

Suddenly Grier sprang up in his chair, dislodging Pingpongo, who whined a little and went off to his own footstool again. Jacobs! Could there possibly
Pingpongo

be any connection? She had seemed so startled. No, it was unlikely. Jacobs was the commonest of surnames. And Helga called her husband "Lion"—Grier did not know why, but supposed it to be a nickname, as the cheques he had received for medical attendance were invariably signed "Ahasuerus-Jacobs."

Yet, as Clarice had said, it was an odd coincidence. Clarice Jacobs! Helga Jacobs! Their husbands might have been related. At all events, he hoped fate would keep them apart. As for Helga, he much preferred her literary pseudonym, and he wished now that he had asked her to sign the photograph "Spiridia." Then Clarice would have had no clue to her identity. As it was, Clarice would of course recognise Mrs Jacobs at Karl Koenigsen's reception, and though he had begged Helga not to be introduced, if she could prevent it, to his wife, there was no knowing what Clarice might do, if she were in one of her reckless moods, and she had a fancy for making Helga's acquaintance. Well, after all, did it greatly matter? He had been foolish to speak so frankly to Mrs Jacobs. That indefinable something in her which always appealed to him had been too strong. He had almost lost control of himself in her presence. The realisation of the fact that she was not indifferent to him had thrilled him to the verge of committing what he felt would have been an unpardonable outrage upon her confidence. It was well that he had succeeded in holding an iron hand upon himself, even at the cost of appearing hard and unsympathetic. She might forgive the one; she could never have forgiven the other. On the whole he was glad that he had not divulged to her the truth about her husband, which he had come there to make known to her. Jacobs had not wished her to know, but Grier had at first thought it would be wiser to prepare her. He had, however, decided during their talk that he would not tell her, for it seemed to him that in her state of
health apprehension would be far worse for her than even a sudden shock. His heart leaped within him as he remembered that before very long she would probably be a widow, and a wild regret tore him. If only he were free!

To do him justice, he had never till now speculated upon how different things might have been for him had he not made Clarice his wife. It had not occurred to him that he need not have married her. That one mad act excepted, Grier was a straightforward, clean-living man; and it would have seemed to him beneath contempt to play any woman false. He was getting together a good London practice when he married. His profession absorbed him, and it was a long time before he would acknowledge to himself that he had made a terrible mistake. It was natural, he supposed, that Clarice should repine at the dull life she led both before and after her position was regularised, for it was out of his power to give her much of his society. Then, one or two holidays spent with her made him realise how utterly unfitted she was to be his companion, and the two had drifted far apart. For a long time now he had taken his vacation trips alone; and as he became more sought after, the two saw less and less of each other. Thus it came about that medical science was the one thing Grier lived for. At least this had been so till he was called to attend Ronald Jacobs. During the months that followed, Grier began to understand for the first time what a woman might be as wife and mother and mistress of a house. For in his professional life, narrowed from other interests, he had had small experience of women except as patients. He was startled when he began to feel the hold Helga Jacobs was getting over him. But he had tried to keep grip upon himself. He was a different being now from the undisciplined youth who had been swept along by the sensuous attraction of Clarice. Now he was captivated by a woman seemingly as cold as Clarice had been the reverse,
and who, if her deepest longings were but poorly satisfied in her home, yet made the upholding of it an ideal from which she never wavered.

The situation would have become a strained one to a different nature, but Grier had also made a god of duty, and was able to fulfil it as far as was required of him in his relations with Mrs Jacobs and her son, without, at least until to-day, any divergence into paths of treacherous sweetness. But to hear Helga's name—Helga, who was to him divinity and priestess—lightly tossed from the lips of Clarice, was more than he could bear, and he cursed the accident, due to his own carelessness, which had led to his wife's discovery of Helga's photograph. Nevertheless, the man cared little on his own account whether he had betrayed his secret. Clarice might think what she would. No doubt she believed that a man who had once plotted to deceive a husband would be ready to do the same thing again.

Grier got up presently, and Pingpongo, who was disconsolately examining a few empty nutshell which had fallen on the floor, watched his master in a melancholy way while he went to the writing-table. There he opened the drawer he had so carefully closed a little while before. With Helga's photograph in his hand, the man's face, grim, grey and unhandsome though it was, softened curiously. He gazed reverently at the picture for some time, and then replaced it in the drawer. He had been trying to learn from it what, in given conditions, she would think or feel. He could only judge from his own somewhat limited personal knowledge of the woman. He had never read one of "Spiridia's" novels, and had seen little of the social side of her life. He did not know her as the world knew her. Nevertheless, it was the real woman whom he knew—of that he was quite sure.

As he turned back again, Pingpongo, who was squatting before the fire, which was dying down, lifted his little grey face with a pathetic expression.
The Other Mrs Jacobs

upon it. The nutshells had all proved to be empty, and Pingpongo’s philosophy, for the present at all events, was a thing of the past. He was cold and tired, and he wanted to go to sleep.

“Life’s a queer business, Pingpongo—a terrible jumble at best. One seems always to get mixed up with the wrong people; but I suppose if we’re such fools as to tie knots in our tails, Pingpongo, we can’t complain of the kinks. Imagine how nice it would be if you could go swinging away into the wild woods in search of your ideal she-monkey—provided she happened to be the right one! And imagine what life would be if I could find Helga free, and go to her with clean and unshackled hands and give her the love she craves for. I take it that’s the key to evolution and progress, Pingpongo, from the lowest rung of the ladder to the highest—Love.”

The monkey dropped down from the stool where he was sitting and crawled in abject devotion to his master’s knee, which he hugged sympathetically with both his small arms.
CHAPTER VIII

CHRYSANTHEMUMS

The next day was brighter. The fog, temporarily dispelled, hung only here and there in thin curtains of mist, through which filtered pale gleams of autumnal sunshine.

Mrs Grier, in whom a mixed nationality asserted itself in various ways, never descended to breakfast in the dining-room, where the doctor ate a healthy English meal, but had her chocolate and French rolls in the boudoir adjoining her bedroom. The doctor's room was at the back, over his consulting-room, and it frequently happened on days when Mrs Grier dined out, or went to the theatre, that he did not see his wife at all during the twenty-four hours.

Mrs Grier, with a satisfied air, looked out of her bedroom window upon the improvement in the weather. She was busy dressing herself for an outdoor excursion, having taken her early luncheon in the morning-room. Doctor Grier ate no luncheon beyond a biscuit and a glass of sherry taken in an interval between seeing his patients and starting off at two o'clock on his afternoon round. It was one of Mrs Grier's grievances that she could not ask more than two friends to luncheon, because the larger room in which they dined was not available in the middle of the day. Mrs Grier enjoyed the process of beautifying herself. Her costume was a daring and yet harmonious combination of colour.
—a blend of brown, blue and green, with, here and there, flaring touches of red. Her large picture hat was wreathed in autumn leaves and scarlet berries, and a bouquet of tawny orchids nestled in her muff of sable and lace. She was a striking-looking little woman, with her bright eyes, her carefully-rouged cheeks, and the small, scarlet, determined mouth. She flashed a smile at herself in the glass, for she was well satisfied with her appearance, and her teeth showed like pearls between the red lines of her lips. Evidently her thoughts gave her pleasure, for the ill-tempered mood of last evening seemed to have departed.

Her toilette completed, she picked up her gloves and parasol and went downstairs. Before leaving the house, however, some curious attraction drew her into her husband’s consulting-room. She had heard the carriage drive off which took him upon his round, and felt annoyed, for she would have liked to use it herself. She opened the door, finding the room, as she had supposed, unoccupied, and advanced slowly, gazing round, especially at the array of photographs, though she scarcely expected to find there the portrait of Mrs Jacobs. He would keep that, she thought, in a less public place. She wished to study the face of the woman whom she felt instinctively was likely to influence her own life. A burning desire filled her that she might somehow have the power of controlling that influence, and of turning it to suit her own ends. Clarice Grier had long ceased to care for her husband, but she was none the less jealous of the woman whom she guessed had won from him what she could never again possess.

She searched about the mantelpiece and writing-table, and even tried the drawers, finding them locked. Suddenly something growled at her angrily, and she started as if she had been shot, to see that Pingpongo had swung himself up to a corner of the
Chrysanthemums

table and was gibbering at her, his small face distorted, his lips drawn back from his teeth in a most sardonic and human grin. The little creature looked like the embodiment of some power seated there to protect that which his master held sacred.

Clarice shrank back, feeling almost frightened. She had an insane dislike and dread of Pingpongo. The creature affected her strangely, and had she been superstitiously inclined she might have explained on psychological grounds her terror of the tiny thing. As it was, she raised her fist and went forward to cuff Pingpongo. But the monkey showed such fierce anger in every line of its small, tense form and distorted face, that she stayed the blow and turned upon her heel. “Little beast! Get out of here. Or no—perhaps you're better where you are. You can stop there,” and she signed loftily to him from the door mat. “You and your master are a pair of ill-tempered brutes, and you, at all events, sha’n’t come about the house.”

She shut the door carefully upon the monkey and, going out, ordered Johnson to whistle up a hansom. Five minutes later she was being driven towards Victoria.

In the train, going down to the Crystal Palace, where she was bent for the afternoon, Clarice pulled a note out of her reticule, and, smoothing it against her palm, read over again the few lines it contained:—

“DEAR LITTLE WOMAN,—I'm painting an ex-mayoress at Sydenham to-morrow, and am bidden, at the end of my sitting, to the family mutton and greens. Suppose you meet me at the Crystal Palace. I believe there's a Chrysanthemum Show on, and I'll be in the Pompeian Court between four and half past. We might have tea together, and should still get home in time for dinner. Our evening last time was delicious, but a little risky. I don't think we must do it again, for the present
“Risky!” commented Clarice. “Perhaps it was, but life would be a tame sort of affair if we never took a risk. You were not so cautious, Mr Karl, a year ago, before you took up this St Helga craze. St Helga! St Helga! Helga Jacobs!” She repeated the name half aloud, for she was alone in the carriage. “Has this woman, Helga Jacobs, got anything to do with it, I wonder? That would be queer—a regular chapter of coincidences. But I’m not going to allow interference with my plans, whatever comes of it. You shall have a nice long rope, my dear Karl, and so shall you, my excellent, moral Andrew. But you’ll both find at the critical moment that there’s someone you know pretty well, but haven’t made sufficient allowance for, at the other end of it. And that someone doesn’t intend that either of you shall hang himself—oh, dear, no!”

Mrs Grier laughed to herself as she looked out of the window and watched the suburban villas, festooned with red Virginia creeper, fly past as the train went on. She had a genius for intrigue, and thoroughly enjoyed dramatic complications. Her opportunities for these had not been extensive during her respectable married life in London, but she had made the most of them. Now, as years increased, she became reckless. Sometimes, when she longed madly for some fresh excitement, anything to break what she was pleased to call the monotony of her days, she felt that she would not care very much if her husband found out how she employed her time during the many hours which he devoted to his profession. He had no business to neglect his wife, she told herself, if he expected her to be faithful.

When the train reached the Crystal Palace Station,
Chrysanthemums

Clarice sauntered up the stairs, making her way into the great building without hurry, for it wanted three-quarters of an hour yet to the time of her appointment. Koenigsen would, she knew, come in at another entrance, and she would be able to stroll about and look at the flowers before meeting him. The Chrysanthemum Show was, she found, a more important affair than she had imagined, and the Palace was unusually crowded. The great central transept of the glass building was crowded with exhibition growers and with flower lovers who had come to see the blooms. Clarice mingled with the surging mass of people, putting up her long-handled glasses so that she might study the different varieties, for she took some interest in flowers, and she certainly did not care for palms or statuary, the other chief features of the nave. By degrees she grew fascinated by the rows of curiously tangled and magnificent, regular petalled blossoms. Each heavy head, proudly set in its own holder, looked like a lovely lady attired for conquest, and seemed to be saying to her that as much time and trouble had been expended upon its toilette as that which had been given to her own. Mrs Grier was a practical little person, not particularly imaginative, but she almost fancied that the chrysanthemums were laughing at her and favourably comparing their own beauty with her own. It amused her to think so, at anyrate, and she strolled on, listening idly to the snatches of talk around her, as she paused before one group of specimens after another, without paying much heed to what was going on in her vicinity.

Presently the sight of a man's back and profile arrested her attention. She stood rooted to the spot, and her cheeks paled beneath their artificial rose. There was something in the set of the strong-looking neck and shoulders, and in the lines of the grave profile strangely familiar. The man was carefully dressed in a well-cut frock-coat and neatly-brushed silk hat.
The Other Mrs Jacobs

He held a handsome stick in one hand, which he raised to point out a particular plant to another man with whom he was talking; and on the ungloved hand Clarice saw a peculiar ring—a turquoise scarab—which she remembered. Had she needed any other confirmation of the truth of her suspicions that ring would have been sufficient. But she needed none. Though nearly eighteen years had elapsed since she had last seen that beaked face, clean-shaven but for its heavy moustache, and though the hair, which she remembered as black, was now grizzled, she felt no doubt that she was looking upon Judah Jacobs, the commercial traveller, whom, as a girl of seventeen, she had married in Brussels, and whom she had left at Helsingkräad on the plea of a visit to some friends in England, because she was tired of him. She watched him, fascinated by his appearance, the look of prosperity about him, and a certain dignity which in former years he had not possessed. He had not grown stout and coarse with advancing age, as many men do; on the contrary, he seemed to be more refined; his bearing was almost distinguished. And his clothes were of English make. He must have left Helsingkräad, she decided, and be living in London. Very likely he had married again. It was strange that he was not dead, after all. Clarice had well-nigh persuaded herself during the course of these years that she had really been a widow when Doctor Grier went through with her that ceremony at the registry office, though she had not been at all sure of it at the time. Wild thoughts surged in her mind. She was essentially theatrical, and gloried in a situation. Here was one to suit the most exacting appetite. It did not occur to her to make her escape. She was listening intently to what Judah Jacobs was saying. His voice had not altered either, but he had less accent than formerly.

"Well, I'll mention it at the Shade and Sparkle
Chrysanthemums

board," he remarked. "But they're particular, you know, and expensive. It'll be a pretty heavy commission."

"I take it the 'ad.' is worth paying for," returned the other. "I shall trust to you to cut it as low as you can. There's amateur gardeners in high life who'll read Shade and Sparkle, but won't look at a catalogue." The man speaking was evidently a chrysanthemum grower, who wished to advertise a new variety. He was gazing with parental affection at a singularly fine specimen. "The trouble I've had to get those petals in place," he went on. "You'd scarcely believe it. Every one of 'm has got to be curled like a woman's hair, and treated with as much care, but they are beauties to look at. They pay for their bit o' dressing. Now for the catalogue—remember, I shall expect you to send me a first-rate artist who'll do the picture in style. Three blooms, I should say—single figures standing out on a tasty background, with maybe the stalks just crossed at the tip, and a chaste design in gold, and two shades of purple for the lettering."

Mr Jacobs nodded. The subject was not as dear to his heart as it was to that of the grower, but he took directions for the advertisement in his usual attentive, business-like manner. A few more words passed between them, then Mr Jacobs pulled out his pocket-book and made some notes. The case was of russia leather, with a neat gold monogram.

"Fancy Jude coming to that!" thought Clarice. "It looks like a keepsake—from a woman. I shouldn't wonder if he'd got another wife." Then suddenly an idea flashed into her brain which almost staggered her. "Helga Jacobs! Judah Jacobs! Ahasuerus Jacobs! Supposing these were one and the same man. Supposing Helga Jacobs was his wife!"

Clarice laughed excitedly. She was not conscious of having laughed aloud, but Mr Jacobs heard her. He turned abruptly, and the two stood face to face.
The Other Mrs Jacobs

Her mocking eyes met his, and her red lips smiled at him. The crowd pressing forward at the moment forced them nearer to each other, and her dress brushed his knee.

"Dieu!" she exclaimed, falling back upon her mother's tongue, which Grier did not speak, and the fashion of which she had almost forgotten, and added dramatically, "So it is you, Jude—come back from the dead!"
CHAPTER IX

A HEAVY PREMIUM

The recognition on both sides was complete. A grey pallor overspread Mr Jacobs's face. He staggered, and leaned against the broad red pedestal of the statue of Perseus, his left hand spasmodically pressing his chest.

"Have I startled you into a fit?" she asked.

"Well, I was a bit taken aback myself." As he did not answer she took his arm. "Come, Jude, I didn't mean to upset you. What is it—horror or joy—which? Look here, let's go into one of those courts at the side and talk things out. That's the best thing to do."

He recovered himself with a gasp. His face was still ashen. She drew him away from the throng.

"Feeling better," she said. "Have a nip of brandy?"

He shook his head, and, standing up straightly, he freed himself from her hold and looked at her from head to foot.

"My God! Clarice," he exclaimed, "what's the meaning of this? I understood that you had died eighteen years ago in St James's Hospital."

"And I," she returned, "was under the impression that you were killed seventeen and a half years ago in a railway accident between Ostend and Paris."

"Yes, I know," he replied. "A few other people thought so at the time. It was a mistake."

"Apparently we have both been labouring under a
The Other Mrs Jacobs

mistake," she said. "Sit down, Jude. There's nobody here. Heavens! If it isn’t just like old days to be talking to you again."

She had led him to a recess in the Italian Court, and placed herself upon a seat, inviting him by a gesture to her side, but he refused.

"I'll stand, thank you. This a serious matter. You hardly seem to realise how serious. I must have it explained. How comes that it you were reported to me as having died under an operation on the 27th of November '82?"

Clarice shrugged her shoulders with a provoking smile.

"I wonder that you remember the date so exactly."

"I have good reason for doing so. My life's happiness depended upon it."

"Oh! Does that mean that you're married again?"

"Yes."

"It would have been too much, I suppose, to expect that you would remain faithful to my memory, considering, too, the rows we had in our short matrimonial career."

"You have still your devil's knack of gibing."

"Oh, dear, no. I've grown quite amiable. And I've worn well, haven't I? How do you think I look?"

"As you always looked. You haven't changed in the least. How did you manage it, Clarice?"

"What? Keeping my good looks? An easy conscience and a healthy diet."

"I don't mean that. You never had a conscience, and I don't suppose you've grown one. How did you contrive such a plot? for of course it was a plot to deceive me and to get your liberty."

"Frankly, Jude, it was," rejoined Clarice, with engaging candour. "You see, I didn't find you delightful to live with. You were an abominably tough customer, remember."

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A Heavy Premium

“I had to keep a tight hand on you,” said he, “or you’d have run me into debt and disgraced me by your flighty ways.”

“You were always a prude. The mistake you made was in marrying a girl of seventeen who’d been used to enjoy herself. Fancy cooping me up in an attic floor at Helsingkräad. It was enough to drive one mad. You know it nearly drove me mad. I should never have lost my health as I did if you had provided me with decent comforts and amusements.”

“I did all I could. You had every penny of my savings when you insisted upon going to England for treatment.”

“I wonder that I had the spirit to insist. When I think of how I suffered! And if I hadn’t been so ill I might have had a lovely time in London—but not on your savings.”

“I quite believe it. How came you to go into a hospital?”

“I’d spent all my money, and I knew it was no use writing to you for more. Besides—I made acquaintance with the house physician. He arranged things for me.”

“Connived at your infamous plot. Now I begin to understand.”

“Oh, well, Jude, they do make mistakes sometimes, you know, in hospitals as well as in other places. I believe I really was dead, as far as appearances went—for a few hours. Don’t ask me the medical explanation. I can’t give it. Catalepsy, I suppose. Aren’t there plenty of stories about people laid ready for their coffins who have wakened up in mortuaries and dissecting-rooms, and been rescued from the grave by sentimental doctors? That’s just how it was with me—only they didn’t take me into the dissecting-room—mercifully. And in my case there happened to be a sentimental doctor at hand, ready to perform the act of resuscitation. But, if it comes to awkward questions, Jude, how did your name
The Other Mrs Jacobs

happen to be on the list of killed in that railway accident?"

"It wasn't me at all. There was another Jacobs at Helsingkråad."

"Well, how should I know that—shut up as I used to be in my attic? But I had no especial desire to push the inquiry. I didn't write to Helsingkråad for particulars. The announcement served my purpose. It got me a second husband."

"So the man married you?"

"I'm quite respectable, Jude, if that's what you mean. I see you are looking at my get-up. I live in a good quarter. I've got a visiting list. I'm asked occasionally to help hold a stall at some stupid hospital bazaar. And there's someone legally responsible for my dressmaker's bills."

"They must come heavy. Who is the fellow?"

Clarice placed her finger saucily upon her lip.

"Oh! fie, Jude! Your wife's name is not on my visiting list. It appears to me, my friend, that as we've both committed bigamy, we'd better be discreet."

"I am guiltless of blame. I made due inquiries."

"You needn't be afraid. I don't intend to have the law of you. But still, you know, Jude, strictly speaking, I'm Mrs Jacobs. By the way—just as a matter of curiosity—is the other Mrs Jacobs's name—Helga?"

A smothered oath burst from the lips of Jacobs. Clarice mocked at him.

"Come, come, Jude! You really should have dropped those vulgar habits. It sounds quite like old times to hear you swear at me again. But we're both in respectable society now, remember. Do you damn the other Mrs Jacobs?"

"Look here, Clarice. Leave my wife alone—do you understand? She's not to be mentioned or thought of in the same breath with you."

"Heigho! Have we married into the royal family?
A Heavy Premium

Times have changed with you, Jude, since we lived in the attic floor at Helsingkräad."

"They have changed—considerably."

"Did you come into a fortune? Now, do tell me—it's a pardonable interest. When did the luck turn?"

"It turned when I won a lottery ticket for sixty thousand francs."

"You don't say so? And how long was that after I left you?"

"Not many months."

"What a pity I didn't know," said Clarice, frankly. "I might have come back. I call it unkind of you to have kept that dark, Jude. Still, sixty thousand francs sounds a great thing, but it doesn't come to anything so tremendous after all." She did a rapid sum in mental arithmetic.

"It was the beginning of my fortune," he said. "It brought me into touch with the business man who took me into partnership, and who has since died and left me his money and his interest in the firm, of which I'm consequently the head now."

"I know who you mean—that old Jew money-lender in Helsingkräad—Ahasuerus."

"Yes. I don't know how you've heard it."

"I've just put two and two together. It was silly of me not to do so before. So that's why you're Ahasuerus-Jacobs in these days. Big advertising agency, isn't it? Money-lending, too, I suppose? Oh, yes, I can easily find out all I want to know about you, and about your wife too."

The pallid look came again over his face, and something also of terror.

"I should like to make the other Mrs Jacobs's acquaintance," pursued Clarice. "It might be managed without much difficulty. You could introduce me as an old friend, couldn't you? And anyhow, there's nothing to prevent me from finding out your address in the Red Book, and calling to
introduce myself. I should soon judge whether it would be worth my while to disturb the harmony of your dove's nest."

"You demon!" he cried. "Before you do that, I'll tell my wife the truth and face the matter out. The plot was of your contriving, and, if it came to a court of law, the charge of bigamy would lie on your shoulders! What you'd have to consider is whether it would be worth your while to pay the penalty."

"There's a good deal to consider, one way and another," returned Clarice, sweetly. "I shall take a little while to think it all out. As far as paying the penalty goes I think we stand pretty even. Looking at things all round, it's a nice tangle—perhaps a more complicated one than you're aware of." She laughed in a way that maddened him.

"Look here," he said roughly. "You don't want to disgrace yourself, I suppose. What's your object in this?"

"I always liked a gamble, Jude, though you wouldn't even let me play at Petits Chevaux."

"It's money then! I thought as much."

"It might be love, Jude—or hate. You don't seem to suspect that I might be glad to get rid of my husband—at a fair price."

"I am not surprised. He must be a man utterly without principle."

"Oh! he has principles—of a sort. Chiefly scientific ones."

"What's your price?" he asked abruptly. "I'll pay it, if it's within reason."

"For my husband. He's a rising celebrity—not to be had for nothing."

"Cease jesting. How much do you want for holding your tongue and leaving my wife alone?"

"I can't agree to that indefinitely—not at any price," she answered with set lips.

He considered for a few moments in silence, while Clarice watched him furtively. "You're a fiend," he
A Heavy Premium

muttered. "Can I buy a year's silence from you then? At—say a thousand pounds?"

"Ah! There's something at the bottom of this," Clarice exclaimed warily. "What am I risking on the year? If I'm to insure against your death, Jude, it must be a heavy premium. Do you suffer from liver, my friend, or is it heart? You look as pale as a ghost. There's something wrong with you."

"Nonsense. There's nothing wrong."

"Yes, there is, and it's my belief you know it. I'd want a medical certificate to convince me that you're sound."

Mr Jacobs shook his shoulders with an angry laugh as he turned, taking a few steps along the court, then coming back to her. She had risen, and was looking at him with malign triumph. He stood, bending forward a little towards her, both hands resting on the head of his walking-stick, the ungloved one uppermost.

"If I hadn't recognised your face, I should have known you by that ring," she observed.

"Come," he exclaimed, "there's no use in bandying words. I've got to catch a train back to London."

"And I have to meet a friend here," she replied. "On the whole, I'd rather he didn't find me talking to you, so I think, Jude, we'd better say good-bye."

She moved towards the archway, which gave on the great nave, and peered amid the crowd through her double eyeglass. "I fancy I see him," she said, rejoining Mr Jacobs. "If you want to get to the train, Jude, you can go along that way."

She pointed to another exit from the court. He put his hand peremptorily on her shoulder.

"Clarice, you'd better take care," he said hoarsely. "I'm capable of killing you rather than that you should bring trouble on my wife. What is the sum to be?"

"Three thousand," she answered promptly. "And
The Other Mrs Jacobs

I'll do nothing for a year from the day you pay it me."

He seemed to be thinking.

"You might have been more modest in your demands," he said at length. "But I agree. When and where shall I give it to you?"

She was sorry now that she had not said four thousand. He must be richer even than she had supposed. She, too, thought for a few moments.

"I will come to your office," she said. "There will be nothing unusual in that, I suppose. Where is it?"

He demurred, but she insisted. She had no intention, she told him, of "giving herself away," and this was the simplest plan to avert suspicion. It ended in his telling her where his office was. She consulted the tablets hanging with her little gold reticule, after she had entered the address.

"I could come the day after to-morrow—Saturday morning. That will give you time to get the oof together. Notes, please. Shall we say 12.30?"

"No, it won't do. I'm going out of town by a late train on Friday, and I don't get to the office till Monday."

"Very well. Let it be Monday morning at 12.30. If you were amiable you might take me to lunch at the Ship and Turtle."

"I am not amiable. And I can't see you quite so early in the day. I am not sure when I may get back. You had better come about five o'clock. I shall be there then, and we'll get it over. This is a bad business for me, Clarice. I don't bless the fate that thrust you in my way."

"Bear!" she pouted. "I certainly do not envy the other Mrs Jacobs. Well, good-bye till Monday. That's your road."

She watched him disappear by the other exit; then taking a tiny aluminium case, containing looking-glass, powder, and one or two other toilet adjuncts
A Heavy Premium

from her muff, she surveyed herself, touching up her face and rearranging her fringe beneath her spotted veil. A group of chrysanthemum lovers strayed into the court, interrupting her in the little rite to beauty which she was performing, and Clarice, putting away the things, rose with a rustle of her silken skirts, and betook herself once more to the central hall, in which the crowd was thinning a little. She sauntered along in the direction where she had espied Kœnigsen, but could not now distinguish him, and turned off towards the place of rendezvous. No doubt he had gone back there, or would do so presently. She concluded that he had grown tired of waiting, which was not surprising, seeing that she was a good while after the time appointed. She quickened her steps, glancing hither and thither in pretty perturbation, for she was really anxious lest she should miss him. It was scarcely like Clarice to put herself out because she was inconveniencing someone else, and her anxiety was a tribute to Kœnigsen's power over her.

At last she came upon him in a secluded corner, twirling his blonde moustache, and looking puzzled and cross. He had not seen her, and she made a little détour, and stopped for a moment admiring the physique of the man, the flowing beard and the distinctive personality. She looked cautiously round, but the chrysanthemum show and the tea hour had caused a congestion of interests in the nave. There was no one about just here. She stole up behind him, cooing in his ear a plea for pardon.

"So sorry! So sorry! Please don’t be angry. Will the Viking forgive his repentant Clari?"

Kœnigsen turned round and raised his hat with elaborate courtesy. He was always elaborate, and, to give him his due, seldom ill-tempered; for Kœnigsen had found that moods which did not amuse his patrons were not paying, socially or professionally. Yet Clarice scented a certain aloofness
The Other Mrs Jacobs

in his salutation. She became more conventional immediately.

"I have been detained," she said, "by an old friend whom I had not seen for years, and who would not let me go."

"Ah!" he rejoined; "so it was not the cab, nor the crowd, nor the grey wolf of a husband. Dear witch, the sight of you is an ample atonement for half an hour of boredom."

"I'm glad you think so. Then I needn't make any more apologies."

He examined her critically.

"You look charming. I'm so glad you appreciate the value of a vivid patch of colour. Why is it that the ordinary woman is never well dressed?"

"Because she dresses for women, and not for men," rejoined Clarice. "There's one month, no more, in the life of the ordinary virtuous woman when she dresses for a man."

"The man. And he goes nap on that honeymoon month. Poor devil! It's soon ended."

"The woman goes nap on that month too—sometimes," said Clarice. "And it's soon ended for her. Man is an animal that desires change."

"Man is a noble animal, especially the artist," parried Koenigsen. "He remains faithful to his ideal, though he may worship it under different names."

Clarice tilted her hat, as she looked up at the tall artist beside her. There was pained questioning in the look. She had lost her mocking air, and it might have been a distressed child asking,—

"Does that mean that you are getting tired of me, Karl?"

They were walking through a deserted corridor. He avoided her glance as he answered,—

"My dear Clari, the scent of roses is always pleasant, and so are the effervescent qualities of champagne. Still, for practical purposes—"
A Heavy Premium

"Solid diet is desirable!" She took the words out of his mouth. "How did you enjoy the family mutton to-day?"

"It really was mutton—first-class mutton, roasted, with onion sauce."

"Excellent! I had a pâté-de-foie-gras sandwich, with still moselle."

He smiled and turned to her.

"You are irresistible in every way. Let me look at you, witch."

She stopped. They had got into the Palace grounds. Clarice seized the picturesque moment, and put herself into harmony with a plaster Artemis, and a dead tree draped in gorgeous Virginia creeper. Königsen gazed at her admiringly.

"Thank you. My ex-mayoress is stout and ruby-coloured. She insisted upon being painted in black satin trimmed with jet. You can imagine what a relief you are to the eyes."

"I daresay she is a very good woman—your ex-mayoress, and consequently much happier than I am."

"Aren't you happy, my dear child?"

"You know that I'm not." She spoke impetuously.

"You know that my life resolves itself each day into one question—shall I or shall I not see him? When I do, it means, perhaps, an hour of feverish joy and an after-taste of doubt. When I do not, twenty-four hours of blank misery."

"Do you think that's good enough, Clari? Hadn't we better put a stop to it?"

"What do you mean? Are you tired of me?" she asked again.

"Certainly not. It is impossible to tire of anyone who shows such a delicious variety of moods as you do, my dear. But—well, the fact is that I've settled down into a less Bohemian groove. This St Helga business has undoubtedly brought me into prominence, and that is likely to increase, rather than the
other way. I'm taking a different line of work. The chances are that I shall be compelled to give up my free, hugger-mugger sort of studio life, and perhaps build myself a house in one of the new artistic quarters. And later on, of course, I shall have to—marry."

"Ah!" The word was a sharp exclamation of pain. "So that is what is in your mind, Karl Koenigsen?"

"Most men have to come to it some time or other, you know, Clarice. Besides, it isn't as if you weren't married yourself." He waited a minute, during which she preserved an ominous silence. "I don't mean that we need break off entirely," he added rather awkwardly. "No one can understand me as you do."

Clarice was still silent. They had reached a tree in the grounds which had a bench under it. She seated herself at one end of the bench; he sideways at the other, so that they were face to face.

"I thought you were going to the tea-rooms," he objected.

"Not just yet."

"But I engaged our table, and ordered chocolate with whipped cream—just as you like it."

"It can wait," said Clarice. "Now tell me. Who is the girl?"

"There's no girl. You know I detest girls. I could never marry a girl."

Clarice broke into her tinkling laugh. She began to feel reassured.

"It must be a widow then."

"Oh, dear, no. There's no widow. I am merely contemplating a possible contingency."

"A probable contingency!"

"Well, if you like to put it so. But believe me, I've made no plans. It's as well to be prepared, that's all."

"Yes, it's as well to be prepared," rejoined Clarice. "For example, if I were free, would you marry me?"
A Heavy Premium

"It would be delightful, of course," he answered, but without enthusiasm. "Only, for one thing, you are not free."

"I might be. Stranger things have happened."
She looked at him provocatively. He smiled at her, but shook his head.

"Grey wolves live long, and they show fangs when they're hungry."

"My grey wolf will never again be hungry for me," she said. "He's prowling after other prey."

"Is that so?"

"He's in love with one of his patients."
Koenigsen shrugged.

"I wish him good fortune. But let us talk of something more amusing."

A few minutes ago he had felt almost afraid of Clarice. She had sounded tragic, and he disliked tragedy. Now he cleverly turned the conversation, and was grateful to her for following him off emotional ground. He told her about the preparations for his evening exhibition, about his prospects, his sellers, his commission to paint aristocratic ladies —sundry experiences flattering to his egotism which had befallen him. She too had incidents of the last few days to relate, and gave them a piquant flavour. After all, he reflected, she was excellent company.

"I want you to come and sit for me for an idea I'm working out," he said.

"What is the idea?" she asked.

"Something from one of 'Spiridia's' books—*The Chameleon Maid*—you're just the type."

"I don't care for 'Spiridia's' books. They're too dreamy and fanciful to suit me. It's a pseudonym, isn't it? Do you know who she is?"

"I ought to," he answered unguardedly. "We both come from St Helga."

Clarice seized a clue.

"Then she has helped you in the St Helgan Gallery business?"
"Yes, of course."
"I wonder you never told me about her."
"Well, it's a mistake talking about one woman to another. They don't like it—specially 'Spiridia.'"
"Why specially 'Spiridia'?"
"Because it isn't her real name, and she doesn't care about it being identified with her socially—though, of course, most people know."
"I don't know."
"You're a little out of the swim, you see, my dear. The artistic and literary swim, I mean, of course," he added hastily. "Science is your line, doctors, and so forth."
"That's true," she answered, mollified; "but I should like to know 'Spiridia.'"
"You'll see her at my show to-morrow evening."
"Then there's no great secret about it. Is she a widow?"
"Oh, no. Her husband is a great friend of mine."
"So she's married?" A light of relief shone in Clarice's eyes. "You might tell me her name."
"It's a very ugly one. It doesn't suit her at all. A horrid Jewish name."
"Well, you needn't apologise on her behalf. I presume she took it to please herself. What on earth is it?"
"Jacobs."
"Jacobs!" repeated Clarice. "Tell me—is it Helga Jacobs?"
"Yes. She's a countrywoman of mine—named after her native island. How did you know?"
"I've seen a signed photograph that she gave to my husband."
"Now I come to think of it," said Koenigsen, "your husband attends young Jacobs—her son. We were speaking of Doctor Grier only a few days ago, and I was surprised to find that she did not know he was married. I wonder why he did not tell her."
"He did not tell her," said Clarice, "because she's the woman he's in love with."

Clarice rose abruptly. A tumult was raging within her. Here indeed were complications. She laughed shrilly. Then she felt Koenigsen's eyes upon her face, and was afraid of betraying herself.

"Come to the tea-room," she said. "It's time we had that chocolate and whipped cream."