

She turned round and looked at his face. The moonlight was upon it, and the dark lines looked as though they had been traced with a pencil on the face of a marble statue. It was grim, drawn, and immovable. Only the deep-set eyes glowed with passion, and they seemed to devour her as she met them with her own quiet gaze.

"It is impossible, Mr Walrojd," she answered in a low voice. "Do you not know it is impossible?"

"Lamira Tredegar is dead," he answered, curtly. "His snip never reached Lima. It was due there more than a year ago. One of the boats was found floating bottom upwards in the South Pacific. Another ship reported the burnt hull of a vessel 200 miles east of where the boat was found. There is little doubt that it was the 'White Swallow.'" All this is history, known to everyone. I am not inventing it for my own purposes."

Again there was silence. The curlew had ceased to cry and had gone to rest. It was more than a minute before Mavanwy answered. She looked out again at the sea with parted lips and clasped hands. Then she got off the wall and faced the man.

"Even if he is dead," she said, in a low, strained voice, "it does not matter. Before he left England I swore I would be true to him and wait for his return. If he comes I am here to receive him. If he never returns, I have but to wait until I die. Women have done that before now, Mr Walrojd. They are not so weak as men suppose."

The man's eyes blazed fiercely, and striding towards the girl he caught her by the wrists and looked into her eyes. The brute beast had risen within him, and he could no longer contain himself.

"It matters not whether he be living or dead," he said, hoarsely; "I love you, and you shall be my wife. I can wait; I have rarely waited in vain for anything that I desire. Do you know that the very house you live in is mine; that this land is mine, if I choose to take it, that I have bought your father body and soul, and could turn you both out of here to-morrow."

"In other words," she said, with a contemptuous curl of her upper lip, "you have tried to buy me. Let go of my hands, Mr Walrojd. Your touch is loathsome to me. There are other houses to live in than this. As for my father, he can make his own bargains and pay his own debts. A few minutes ago I respected you, though I could not marry you. Masterful men like you compel respect, but one does not respect wild animals. Let go my hands, I say, or I will call out."

Her face was white with fury, and for the moment she felt more like a trapped tigress than a sweet natured woman. Her whole soul had risen in revolt at this outrage. Her mind, filled with loving thoughts of the dead, was stung to madness by the rude grasp of this man. Her eyes flashed dangerously. She would have struck him in the face if her hands had been free.

Cyrus Walrojd laughed. This was a woman after his own heart, and he loved her all the more for this outbreak of passion. But a second later a look of horror crossed his face, his jaw fell,

and suddenly loosing her wrists he struck savagely at something that was running across one of his own hands. It was only a little harmless spider. But he had struck, as though it had been an adder. Nothing remained of it but a small blotch of blood. He rubbed his hand vigorously with his handkerchief, and removed all traces of it. Then he looked up quickly to see if Mavanwy had noticed his action. But she was several yards away from him. He hesitated for a moment, and then turning sharply he walked up the path, and re-entered the house.

(To be continued.)

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An Unwilling Bride.

By R. W. WEEKES.

(Author of "Prisoners of War," etc.)

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The Church was ready, the guests were waiting; already the half hour had struck, yet the bridegroom had not arrived. Kind friends near the front began to whisper that the Marquis de Châtillon was repenting of his choice; for Mademoiselle de Saint-Laurent, in spite of her dower of beauty and of gold, varied in temper between an iceberg and volcano. Many men had wooed her, but she sent them all away; she had only accepted de Châtillon to please the Comtesse de Lusignan, her sister, who was in despair at Agnes' persistent refusals. Now it seemed that Mademoiselle de Saint-Laurent's own turn to be slighted had come; for the hour sounded from the carillon, and still the bridegroom's place was vacant.

All the Court was there, with the exception of Prince Heinrich himself. Heinrich of Neuberg, so gossip said, was ill-contented by mademoiselle's marriage, because he had been pleased to cast approving eyes on her himself, and he was not used to being thwarted. Some people whispered that his displeasure augured ill for the success of the match. It seemed, however, that there would be no match. Five minutes past the hour, and still no bridegroom; while a stir and whisper among the guests announced the arrival of the twelve pretty girls whom Agnes had chosen as her bridesmaids. They waited at the door, a picturesque group in their Court dresses of white satin and gold, embroidered with purple pansies. Next, on the arm of her brother-in-law, came the unconscious bride, wearing silver brocade and a tiara of diamonds, under which her beauty sparkled like a winter sunrise, rose-colour above the snow. But before she had time to discover the absence of her husband that was to be, before she had reached the chancel steps, another late arrival pushed his way up between the curious friends, and touched her arm.

"Mademoiselle," he said urgently. "Mademoiselle, I must speak to you."

Then Agnes lifted her demure eyelids and saw the humiliating truth. Andre had deserted her. She wheeled round on Andre's friend, anger on her brow.

"Where is the Marquis de Châtillon? Why is he not here?"

"That is what I have to explain." "It will take much explanation?"

"If you would come with me, mademoiselle, I think I can satisfy even you."

Here Agnes' escort, horrified and nervous, plucked at her gown. "Agnes, Agnes, but this is impossible! We must

go home at once! Consider, my dear

"I do consider. Must I not hear whether Andre has an excuse? I will go with M. de Beaurepaire."

"It is sacrilege!" cried M. le comte, almost weeping with anguish. He had meant to say sacre, but he converted it into the other word, regardless of sense. It did not matter much.

"Nonsense, Jules," retorted his ward, in audible tones. M. le comte had lowered his voice out of delicacy. And go she did, in defiance of laws, sweeping down the aisle beside de Beaurepaire. Little enough did Agnes care for what the people thought. When she reached the shelter of the sacristy, she faced round upon her escort imperiously.

"Well, sir?" she demanded. "Why is Andre not here?" "Because he is in prison, mademoiselle."

Mademoiselle started. "In prison? Oh! What for?"

"For conspiracy against Prince Heinrich."

Agnes' colour came and went; she turned away and began to play with the flowers in her bouquet. This put a different complexion on the affair. Prince Heinrich was an autocrat, and he had a taste for refined torture. He was in all things an artist, in the decoration of a ballroom or in punishing a criminal. No one could foretell what cruel and fateful doom he might not pronounce on a man who a week before had been on familiar and intimate terms with him; and, whatever Andre's innocence on the charge of conspiracy, he had committed one serious crime: he had meant to marry Agnes.

"What is to be his fate?" she asked at last, nervously glancing at de Beaurepaire's calm, impassive face.

Yves de Beaurepaire hesitated over his answer, and flushed a little. "Prison is to be his fate, mademoiselle, for the present."

"And then?"

"Then, death! unless you choose to save his life."

"If? What can I do?"

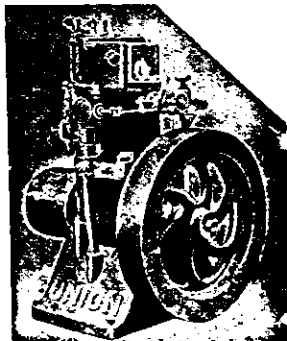
Yves looked her in the face. "Prince Heinrich is willing to release him, on one condition: that you consent to marry me."

The absurdity of the proposal struck first on Agnes, and she laughed aloud. "He must be mad!" she said.

"Mad or sane, he is the Prince." "But this is too absurd!" Agnes cried, beating her little white foot on the ground. "I—marry you! What does he

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