

forever afterward such a pleasant remembrance; and I am deeply interested in your petition to our Lady of Perpetual Help. Perhaps you will permit me to write to you. And now, Madame, do you feel quite strong enough to go back?' (The woman had looked toward her bonnet and shawl.) 'Then let me get you ready, and I shall wait for you in the church while you finish your interrupted prayer. Now,' and she gave an extra pat to the bonnet strings, 'are we ready?'

'Just a moment! I have quite inexcusably talked so much concerning myself, that I did not learn your name; and we must have a name as well as a face to fit memories to. What is your name, my dear?'

'Indeed, Madame, I intended to write it with my address for you, when we should have returned from church, and I hoped to learn yours. My name is Marie Renaud.'

The girl was adjusting her own hat as she spoke, and for the fraction of a second was unaware of the sudden silence. Then she turned quickly, to find her hostess grasping the arms of the chair, but apparently speechless.

'What is it, Madame—oh! what is it? Another attack? See! I knew you were unable to go. Let me make you comfortable again, dear, and remove your wraps.'

But the hands that would have loosened the wraps were pushed aside, as the trembling woman cried:

'Why do you mock me? Why do you mock me in my grief? You were so kind, and now—'

'Mock you, Madame? What—' And then it dawned on Marie that the poor creature's sorrows had been too great for the taxed mind, and it had given way. She would change the subject. No, rather would she ask for her hostess' name, and that might bring back the wandering mind.

'Will Madame have some more hot tea? And then, while she is resting, she can tell me her name, and I shall copy it with the address.'

'My name? My name? It is—it is—oh, I do not understand—yet. My name was—is—is—Marie Renaud.'

It was the girl's turn to be startled. What was to be done? The woman, whatever her name might be, was plainly demented. Would it be prudent to call some of the neighbors? But the agitated woman, although visibly weaker, was regaining her composure. Hesitatingly, she inquired:

'You said—you said—your name—is—'

'Marie Renaud,' slowly and apologetically replied the girl.

'Marie Renaud!—Marie Renaud! That is my name, too.' And she put her hand wearily to her head. Then, as if at some sudden, overpowering thought, she clutched the girl's arm, and earnestly and pathetically studied the young face turned toward her. But what she sought was not there, and she slowly relaxed her grasp and leaned heavily against the chair.

'What folly,' she reproached herself—'what folly to think that, when he died so long ago!'

'Madame Renaud,' said the girl, 'you shall rest a while here. See, I relieve you of your wraps again, and I shall remain until you feel stronger. That is better,' as the tired head leaned back again and the eyes once more closed. 'And now, while we sit here, shall I not tell you of my family, as you have told me of yours?'

'My father, Henri Renaud, was born in France, but lived in India for many years. I was born there, and it was there that my mother died. When I was graduated from the convent school last year, my father decided that we should travel for a year. My maid and I left him only yesterday because I wanted to stay here for a day. The little place had attracted me, as so many of the little villages along the coast have already done; and he went on to the city of X—, where we are to meet him again to-night. My maid awaits me at the queer little inn near the station.'

And then she looked pityingly and closely at the poor, shrinking woman in the chair, and spoke very slowly and distinctly:

'My father's parents died many, many years ago. On the way home we are to visit his mother's grave. In his boyhood my father thought that the sea called him; but the ship on which he sailed lay at Bombay for some weeks. Long before the boat left port, however, the spell of India was upon my father, and the fascination of the strange surroundings appealed to his adventurous spirit. He journeyed inland, and it was five years before he found it possible to sail for Calais, where he learned of his mother's death. He went to her room,—the room in which she had died, and in which so many of the once familiar objects of her care still lay. He went to his old room; and he often says that his tears that day were the bitterest that he ever shed. He visited her grave, and then went back to India, changed in heart, but not in venturesome spirit. He became a soldier of Fortune; and, as is too seldom the case, she smiled on the soldier who enlisted under her banner. He rose to power and wealth, and married an English lady, my mother. She died when I was three years old, so I scarce remember her; my father says I resemble her. He is such a dear, gentle soul, and so very tender to the aged,—trying, he says, to make amends for his neglect of his own mother; and last year he had erected a most beautiful monument over her grave. She lies in L—, and we are to visit there before we return home.'

'His mother's name? His mother's name?' gasped the white-faced woman.

'Madame, I was named in her memory—Marie Renaud.'

'No, no, no! It cannot be—even though you say it, yet it cannot be! It is some false trick, some manner of deceit that I do not, can not understand! Not Marie Renaud—no, no! not Marie Renaud—it is Claire Renaud who lies in L—. She died four years after my boy, my Henri, was lost. And he, my Henri—my boy—is—is—yes, he is your father! You say—O child, tell me, did you say that you will see him to-night? Oh, no! It is too wonderful, too good, too blessed to be true! And yet, it is true: I know it, I feel it true! I see now how easy that mistake of a lifetime was made. When I left my home, it was Claire who bought all that I had. She was Henri's aunt. She bought my house, with all that it held; and then, in less than four years, she died. Henri's mistake was a natural one. He could not know of the transfer of the property, and therefore believed that the Madame Renaud who died in that house, and who left the furniture and keepsakes that he knew so well, was his mother. And all these years I have believed what the captain, in good faith, told me: that Henri had gone down with the ship that was lost in mid-ocean. All these long, terrible years I have sorrowed for him, nor ever knew that he came back to look for me. I never knew; but I trusted and hoped always, and now—now—'

She had fainted again, but this time it was because the joy was greater than the faithful heart could well bear.

Later in the day, Madame Renaud and her granddaughter returned to the church to finish the prayer that had been so strangely interrupted by the granting of its petition, and to make fitting thanksgiving to our Lady of Perpetual Help, who had so generously redeemed the pledge which her title bestows upon her clients.

The next morning, as usual, the ocean spray, catching the sunlight in its mist, splashed against the church walls; the refreshing salt air blew through the open windows and across the framed face that looked out from her dimmed background. The little fleet, with the lights well-trimmed, swung rhythmically; and kneeling once more, and now for the last time in that church, was the bent, black-robed figure. But she was no longer alone. A grey-haired man and his daughter were beside her, and a trinity of thanksgivings ascended.—*Ave Maria.*

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