

BOHEMIA.

Martha, Louis, Bismark, "Precious" and I sat together in the alcove of Louis' studio, watching the crowd in the hot and narrow street below, and passing remarks on it over cold drinks. Louis had a mandolin which he fingered vaguely, bringing forth faint and musical murmurs.

All at once he straightened up and began to sing, improvising the words to the tune of an old hunting song:

"Oh, the rose, red rose has blown,
Love, then pluck it while it lasts,
The wine, red wine in the cup,
Then drink before it passes,
The summer is but three months
old when autumn turns the grasses,
Then sing your summer songs,
Dear love, before the summer's past."

We softly clapped our hands. "Precious" fell back in his chair, and the frown that had lined his young forehead all the afternoon relaxed, for Louis' voice was sweet. He closed his eyes. Louis went on:

"Oh the rose, red rose of life,
Love, is blowing out its lease,
The wine; red wine of life is poured,
Then reach with eager fingers,
Our life is short as summer, love,
and summer never lingers,
So sing your roundelay of life,
before your life shall cease."

This time we were silent. Louis lowered the mandolin to the floor and filled his glass. Just then the door opened and in came Viola.

She looked rather tired and rather warm. Directing an imperious gesture toward Bismark who had occupied the sofa, and now reluctantly resigned it to her, she flung herself down with a sigh. She was naturally pale, and now her brown hair had become loose about her face and lips. Her lashes were drooping with weariness, so that on the whole, as she lay there she looked very young and pathetic.

"What was that you were singing?" she asked presently. And then, without opening her eyes or waiting for an answer, she said, "Sing it again."

Louis sang. Outside you could hear the tanana vendors and the Italian children playing and the carters shouting at their donkeys. Inside we were all quiet. All at once Viola sat up. She clasped her hands about her knee and leaned forward.

"That's our credo, you know," she said, her big eyes going from face to face. "You've struck it well, Louis."

Louis half nodded. Viola's eyes ran on to the face of "Precious" and stopped there.

"Precious," she said after a while. Her voice was low, but "Precious'" eyes swung round to hers irresistibly. They sat staring at each other in silence, very white. Then Viola slowly spoke again. "Are you going?" she asked.

He started. The room was quiet. Bismark reached carelessly for Martha's hand but she jerked it away, not taking her eyes from the pair.

"Precious won't go," she cried. "Precious can't go!"

And still he did not answer. Viola rose, laughing still.

"We'll have a trial. You may be the judge. And you're to try the life we live, you know. You've heard the evidence, against. Such things as these—" she swept her hand toward the empty glasses, toward Martha's careless attitude, "such things as this," she flung an empty purse upon the table, "they've all spoken. Now hear me! For I shall speak today."

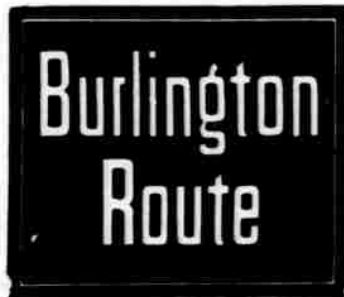
"Five artists! Well, we're honest ones. We make the most of life. We paint when the sun shines, and sing when the rain falls, and if we're poor, we're free. There's Bismark, his coat is shiny, and his manners aren't over nice,—no they're not, Bismark—but his picture'll go in all the same. And who of



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you works like Martha? And who of you sings like Louis? Oh we're not very proper, but we're kind! We're a shabby, out-at-the-elbows lot, but we know the beautiful!"

"Think, 'Precious.' You'll go back home to the white sheep, and keep within the fold. You'll read your law, and you'll go to the 'bops,' and you'll fling your palette into the winds and your brushes to the winds. But you can't keep back the memories. You can't forget. You'll remember the old studio and the alcove and the songs and the work and the ways. You'll remember the Rue l'Argenton and the French moon climbing up over the house tops and the music floating over from the cafe and the smell of spring jessamines rising from the stalls."

"You'll remember Martha and Louis and Cummings and Bismark and me, and the days we've loved together and the days we've starved together and the work we've done. You'll remember the outings in the woods and in the meadows when we painted under the open sky, and drank warm milk from the pails, and sat with the peasants before their peat fires and ate of their salt and bread. You'll remember, but you'll be there alone—and we'll be here."

"Precious, we've loved you well. We'll pay your passage home and forgive you, but we can't follow. Why," she paused a second to draw a breath.

"Martha will you go?"
Martha tossed back the yellow

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from her little face. "Go?" she said. Then she laughed.

"Bismark, will you go?"

"Go," he said, "I'll go to the devil!"

"Louis, will you go?"

"Go," he said. "When I've forgotten how to work and how to laugh and how to sing, then I'll go."

She turned. Her eyes were shining like stars, and she held her head high.

"Precious," she cried. "Precious, will you go?"

Her voice rang high and clear through the studio. "Precious" got up and walked to the window, and stared across the roofs and the smoke toward the clouded west. There were tears in his eyes. After a while he turned around and came back to us.

"You're right," he said simply, stretching out his hand to the pale Viola.

"You're right, and I can't leave it. I'm obliged to you." He stopped abruptly.

"Give us a song, Louis, old boy," he finished.

And Louis sang.

EDITH L. LEWIS.

and Gervaise's body was cremated.

...the devil!

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