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SYNOPSIS.

John Calhoun becomes secretary of state in Tyler's cabinet with the fixed determination to acquire both Texas and Oregon. Nicholas Trist, his secretary, is sent with a message to the baroness von Ritz, spy and reputed mistress of the British minister, Pakenham. Trist encounters the baroness and assists her in escaping from pursuers. She agrees to see Calhoun, and as a pledge that she will tell him what he wants to know regarding the intentions of England toward Mexico, she gives Trist a slipper, the mate of which has been lost. Trist is ordered to Montreal on state business, and arranges to be married to Elizabeth Churchill before departing. The baroness says she will try to prevent the marriage. A drunken congressman, who is assisting Trist in his wedding arrangements, blunderingly sends the baroness' slipper to Elizabeth instead of the owner, and the marriage is declared off. Nicholas finds the baroness in Montreal, she having succeeded, where he failed, in discovering England's intentions regarding Oregon. She tells him the slipper he had contained a note from the Texas attaché to Pakenham, saying that if the United States did not annex Texas within 30 days she would lose both Texas and Oregon. Calhoun orders Trist to head a party bound for Oregon. Calhoun excites the jealousy of Senora Yturrio, and thereby secures the signature of the Texas attaché to a treaty of annexation. Nicholas arrives in Oregon. Later the baroness arrives on a British warship. She tells Nicholas that a note she placed in her slipper caused the breaking off of his marriage, and that she intends to return to Washington to repair the wrong. Nicholas follows her. He learns on the way that Polk has been elected and Texas annexed, and that there is to be war with Mexico. The baroness tells Trist that in return for a compromise of the Oregon boundary on the forty-ninth degree, she has sold herself to Pakenham. She tells him the story of her life.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—Continued.

She nodded. "Yes. Debauchee, rake, monster, degenerate, product of that aristocracy which had oppressed us, I was obliged to marry him, a man three times my age! I pleaded, I begged, I was taken away by night, I was—I was— They say I was married to him. For myself, I did not know where I was or what happened. But after that they said I was the wife of this man, a sot, a monster, the memory only of manhood. Now, indeed, the revenge of the aristocracy was complete!"

She went on at last in a voice icy cold. "I fled one night, back to Hungary. For a month they could not find me. I was still young, I saw my people then as I had not before. I saw also the monarchies of Europe. Ah, now I knew what oppression meant! Now I knew what class distinction and special privileges meant! I saw what ruin it was spelling for our country—what it will spell for your country, if they ever come to rule here. Ah, then that dream came to me which had come to my father, that beautiful dream which justified me in everything I did. My friend, can it—can it in part justify me—now?"

"For the first time, then, I resolved to live! I have loved my father ever since that time. I pledged myself to continue that work which he had undertaken! I pledged myself to better the condition of humanity if I might. There was no hope for me. I was condemned and ruined as it was. My life was gone. Such as I had left, that I resolved to give to—what shall we call it?—the idea democratic."

"Now, may God rest my mother's soul, and mine also, so that some time I may see her in another world—I pray I may be good enough for that some time. I have not been sweet and sinless as was my mother. Fate laid a heavier burden upon me. But what remained with me throughout was the idea which my father had bequeathed me—"

"Ah, but also that beauty and sweetness and loyalty which came to you from your mother," I insisted.

She shook her head. "Wait!" she said. "Now they pursued me as though I had been a criminal, and they took me back—horsemen about me who did as they liked. I was, I say, a sacrifice. News of this came to that man who was my husband. He had not the courage of the nobles left. But he heard of one nobleman against whom he had a special grudge, and him one night, foully and unfairly, he murdered."

"News of that came to the emperor. My husband was tried, and, the case being well known to the public, it was necessary to convict him for the sake of example. Then, on the day set for his beheading, the emperor reprieved him. The hour for the execution passed, and, being now free for the time, he fled the country. He went to Africa, and there he so disgraced the state that bore him that of late times I hear he has been sent for to come back to Austria. Even yet the emperor may suspend the reprieve and send him to the block for his ancient crime. If he had a thousand heads he could not atone for the worse crimes he has done!"

"But of him and of his end I know nothing. So, now, you see I was and am wed, and yet am not wed, and never was. I do not know what I am, nor who I am. After all, I cannot tell you who I am or what I am, because I myself do not know."

"It was no longer safe for me in my own country. They would not let me go to my father any more. As for him, he went on with his studies, some part of his mind being bright and clear. They did not wish him about the court now. All those mat-



"Yes," said she, "Among Other Things I Have Been 'America Vespucci!'"

ters were to be hushed up. The court of England began to take cognizance of these things. Our government was scandalized. They sent my father, on pretext of scientific errands, into one country and another—to Sweden, to England, to Africa, at last to America. Thus it happened that you met him. You must both have been very near to meeting me in Montreal. It was fate, as we of Hungary would say.

"As for me, I was no mere hare-brained radical. I did not go to Russia, did not join the revolutionary circle of Paris, did not seek out Prussia. That is folly. My father was right. It must be the years, it must be the good heritage, it must be the good environment, it must be even opportunity for all, which alone can produce good human beings! In short, believe me, a victim, the hope of the world is in a real democracy. Slowly, gradually, I was coming to believe that."

"She paused a moment. "Then, one time, monsieur—I met you, here in this very room! God pity me! You were the first man I had ever seen. God pity me!—I believe I—loved you—that night, that very first night! We are friends. We are brave. You are man and gentleman, so I may say that, now. I am no longer woman. I am but a sacrifice."

"Opportunity must exist, open and free for all the world," she went on, not looking at me more than I could now at her. "I have set my life to prove this thing. When I came here to this America—out of pique, out of a love of adventure, out of sheer daring and exultation in imposture—then I saw why I was born, for what purpose! It was to do such work as I might to prove the theory of my father, and to justify the life of my mother. For that thing I was born. For that thing I may be damned in the life to come, unless I can make some great atonement. For these I suffer and shall always suffer. But what of that? There must always be a sacrifice."

"The unspeakable tragedy of her voice cut to my soul. "But listen!" I broke out. "You are young. You are free. All the world is before you. You can have anything you like—"

"Ah, do not talk to me of that," she exclaimed imperiously. "Do not tempt me to attempt the deceit of myself! I made myself as I am, long ago. I did not love. I did not know it. As to marriage, I did not need it. I had abundant means without. I was in the upper ranks of society. I was there; I was classified; I lived with them. But always I had my purposes, my plans. For them I paid, paid, paid, as a woman must, with—what a woman has."

"But now, I am far ahead of my story. Let me bring it on. I went to Paris. I have sown some seeds of venom, some seeds of revolution, in one place or another in Europe in my time. Ah, it works; it will go! Here and there I have cost a human life. Here and there work was to be done which I disliked; but I did it. Misguided, uncared for, mishandled as I had been—well, as I said, I went to Paris."

"Ah, sir, will you not, too, leave the room, and let me tell on this story to myself, to my own soul? It is fitter for my confessor than for you."

"Let me, then, be your confessor!" said I. "Forget! Forget! You have not been this which you say. Do I not know?"

"No, you do not know. Well, let me. Let me go on! I say I went to Paris. I was close to the throne of France. That little duke of Orleans, son of Louis Philippe, was a puppet in my hands. Oh, I do not doubt I did mischief in that court, or at least if I failed it was through no lack of effort! I was called there 'America Vespucci.' They thought me Italian! At last they came to know who I was. They dared not make open rupture in the face of the courts of Europe. Certain of their high officials came to me and my young duke of Orleans. They asked me to leave Paris. They did not command it—the duke of Orleans cared for that part of it. But they requested me outside—not in his presence. They offered me a price, a bribe—such an offering as would, I fancied, leave me free to pursue my own ideas in my own fashion and in any corner of the world. You have perhaps seen some of my little fancies. I imagined that love and happiness were never for me—only ambition and unrest. With those goes luxury, sometimes. At least this sort of personal liberty was offered me—the price of leaving Paris, and leaving the son of Louis Philippe to his own devices. I did so."

"And so, then you came to Washington? That must have been some years ago."

"Yes; some five years ago. I still was young, I told you that you must have known me, and so, no doubt, you did. Did you ever hear of 'America Vespucci?'"

A smile came to my face at the suggestion of that celebrated adventuress and mysterious impostress who had figured in the annals of Washington—a fair Italian, so the rumor ran, who had come to this country to set up a claim, upon our credulity at least, to being the descendant of none less than Amerigo Vespucci himself! This supposititious Italian had indeed gone so far as to secure the introduction of a bill in congress granting to her certain lands. The fate of that bill even then hung in the balance. I had no reason to put anything beyond the audacity of this woman with whom I spoke! My smile was simply that which marked the eventual voting down of this once celebrated measure, as merry and as bold a jest as ever was offered the credulity of a nation—once conceivable only in the mad and bitter wit of Helena von Ritz!

"Yes, madam," I said, "I have heard of 'America Vespucci.' I presume that you are now about to repeat that you are she!"

She nodded, the mischievous enjoyment of her colossal jest showing in her eyes, in spite of all. "Yes," said she, "among other things, I have been 'America Vespucci!' There seemed little to do here in intrigue, and that was my first endeavor to amuse myself. Then I found other employment. England needed a skillful secret agent. Why should I be faithful to England? At least, why should I not also enjoy intrigue with yonder government of Mexico at the same time? There came also Mr. Van Zandt of this Republic of Texas. Yes, it is true, I have seen some sport here in Wash-

ington! But all the time as I played in my own little game—with no one to enjoy it save myself—I saw myself begin to lose. This country—this great splendid country of savages—began to take me by the hands, began to look me in the eyes, and ask me: 'Helena von Ritz, what are you? What might you have been?'"

"So now," she concluded, "you asked me, asked me what I was, and I have told you. I ask you myself, what am I, what am I to be; and I say, I am unclear. But, being as I am, I have done what I have done. It was for a principle—or it was—for you! I do not know."

"There are those who can be nothing else but clean," I broke out. "I shall not endure to hear you speak thus of yourself. You—you, what have you not done for us? Was not your mother clean in her heart? Sins such as you mention were never those of earriet. If you have sinned, your sins are white as snow. I at least am a confessor enough to tell you that."

"Ah, my confessor!" she reached out her hands to me, her eyes swimming wet. Then she pushed me back suddenly, beating with her little hands upon my breast as though I were an enemy. "Do not!" she said. "Go!"

My eye caught sight of the great key, Pakenham's key, lying there on the table. Maddened, I caught it up, and, with a quick wrench of my naked hands, broke it in two, and threw the halves on the floor to join the torn scroll of England's pledge.

I divided Oregon at the forty-ninth parallel and not at fifty-four forty, when I broke Pakenham's key. But you shall see why I have never regretted that.

"Ask Sir Richard Pakenham if he wants his key now!" I said.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Victory.

She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide the encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to soul-seducing gold.
For she is wise, if I can judge of her;
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true;
And true she is, as she hath proved herself.
—Shakespeare.

"What have you done?" she exclaimed. "Are you mad? He may be here at any moment now. Go, at once!"

"I shall not go!"

"My house is my own! I am my own!"

"You know it is not true, madam!" I saw the slow shudder that crossed her form, the fringe of wet which sprang to her eyelashes. Again the pleading gesture of her half-open fingers.

"Ah, what matter?" she said. "It is only one woman more, against so much. What is past, is past, monsieur. Once down, a woman does not rise."

"You forget history—you forget the thief upon the cross!"

"The thief on the cross was not a woman. No, I am guilty beyond hope!"

"Rather, you are only mad beyond reason, madam. I shall not go so long as you feel thus—although God knows I am no confessor."

"I confessed to you—told you my story, so there could be no bridge across the gulf between us. My happiness ended then."

"It is of no consequence that we be happy, madam. I give you back your own words about you torch of principles."

For a time she sat and looked at me steadily. There was, I say, some sort of radiance on her face, though I, dull of wit, could neither understand nor describe it. I only knew that she seemed to ponder for a long time, seemed to resolve at last. Slowly she rose and left me, parting the satin draperies which screened her boudoir from the outer room. There was silence for some time. Perhaps she prayed—I do not know.

Now other events took this situation in hand. I heard a footfall on the walk, a cautious knocking on the great front door. So, my lord Pakenham was prompt. Now I could not escape even if I liked.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Polite Chiffonier.
A certain woman while walking down the avenue one Thursday afternoon, her negro maid's "day out," chanced to meet that young person riding in an automobile with two colored friends. The next day the mistress inquired how the maid had enjoyed her ride.
"Oh, it was cert'nly fine!" was the reply. "And the way I came to go, ma'am, was this. I was callin' on my cousin when a friend of hers, a chiffonier, came in. He said he had the machine outside and asked her to have a ride, and, as he concluded me in the invitation, of co'se I went!"

IN OBEDIENCE TO ORDERS

French Boy Caused Merriment by Taking the Order of the Court Too Literally.

A droll incident is reported as having taken place in one of the provincial appeal courts in France. A boy, about fourteen, was summoned to give evidence, and his appearance was such as to move the whole court to laughter. He wore a long redingote, peculiar to the Basque country, and immense boots. His trousers, collar and hat were unquestionably those of a man. The court was convulsed, and the president asked the boy how he dared to treat the court in such a manner. The boy seemed surprised as the president, and taking out the citation from his pocket, read the formula inviting him, "Comparaître dans les affaires de son pere." (To appear in his father's suit.)

THE ALARMING PREVALENCE OF ECZEMA

Finds Victims Among Every Race, Age and Condition.

Of all the diseases of the skin and scalp which torture and disfigure mankind, three-fourths are eczematous. Millions are born with eczema, and it is the only thing other millions have left when they die. Neglect in infancy and childhood, irritating conditions affecting the skin, ignorance of its real nature, improper remedies and many other causes that might be mentioned have created an eczema which, with varying severity, has afflicted countless numbers during their entire lives. Eczema is a skin disease. It is not regarded as hereditary, nor contagious, and is impartially distributed among the rich and poor, the high and low. The agonizing itching and burning of the skin, causing loss of sleep, is usually the most distressing symptom and is caused by the bursting of little vesicles filled with an acrid fluid, which burns as with fire the denuded skin. New vesicles form, fill and burst, scales form upon scales, and crusts upon crusts until disfigurement is added to torture.

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Cure for His Dyspepsy.

Hogan—Phwat makes ye swally all your dinner in two minutes, Grogan? Are yez atin' on a bet?
Grogan—It's for the good av me dyspepsy, Moike. Sure the docther told me to rist an hour after atin', and how else am Oi goin' to git the hour of rist in unless Oi ate loike the divil?

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