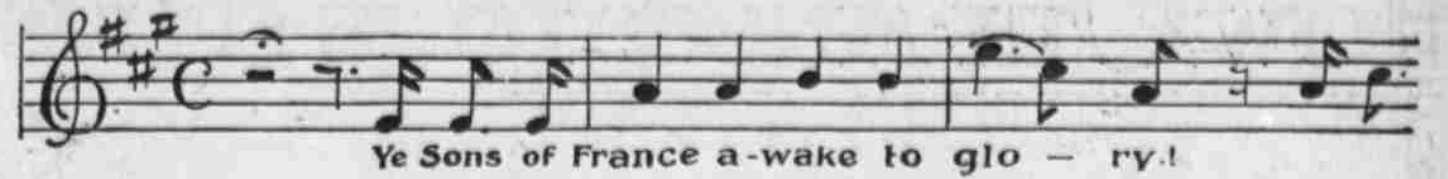


The Song and The Singer

By W. Newman Flower



Ye Sons of France a-wake to glo - ry!

WHAT you ask is impossible. I would not marry my lord were he to offer me his fortune, because—

The girl paused. She stood with one hand resting on the corner of the table, and looking steadily into the wood fire before her. Her father, a man of 60, whose face bore testimony to the passage of years, gazed inquiringly at her. He was not a man to be thwarted.

"Well!" he said. "Go on. We come to the point. There is a reason. Another lover, perhaps?"

"The man I love," the girl corrected, "is Rouget de Lisle."

"Ah!"

Augustin Dietrick, honorable citizen and mayor of Strasbourg in the year of grace 1792, walked slowly across to the window and looked out. The snow swirling down the street clung to the doorsteps and eaves, and found a havenage on the window sill.

"A bad night," he said, with an effort to turn his thoughts. "And heaven help all who haven't a roof to shelter them, for they won't help themselves. Fool! What they could do if they only chose! But no; they will let Louis drive them to the devil, and perish at the palace gates extolling his good deeds."

He returned to his daughter's side and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Violette—my little Violette! You are the prettiest girl in the city. I have watched you grow up, little one, and am proud of you. Now you have the power to stir one, and into action. See how they suffer; but once provide the money and you give them power. Today they work and toil for a pauper's pittance; tomorrow justice shall usurp tyranny!"

He paused as the tears started to his eyes.

"Rouget de Lisle," he muttered, more to himself than to her. "Artilleryman and pauper. Drowned in debts, and music his sole asset. Rouget de Lisle—dreamer; and you love him! So his visits here have been made with a purpose. Is that not so?"

"No, no!" the girl cried. "He does not know; he must never know! I only tell you the truth to avoid the hypocrisy of pretending to love another."

"Yet I like the lad," continued Dietrick. "He is a strange mixture of emotions—outwardly an icicle, inwardly a raging volcano. If he would only break out and show these people I'd give him my little Violette in a month."

The words had scarcely passed his lips before two heavy raps came upon the door without. Violette, running into the passage, turned the lock, and a man, tall and slim, wearing a heavy military overcoat, stepped silently in. Then, without speaking, he shook the lumps of snow that clung to him to the brick floor and proceeded with the same strangeness of manner, and without even a greeting, to remove his coat.

Dietrick came forward, holding a lamp well above his head, so that the flickering jets of light fell on the young man's pale face.

"De Lisle, on my soul!" he said.

De Lisle nodded and followed his host into the sitting room, and Violette slipped away to her little boudoir upstairs and left them alone, as she invariably did.

"You see," Dietrick said, pointing to the remains of the frugal supper that lay on the table. "Plenty does not reign here, but bread—warranted not more than two days baked—is yours if you wish. Still, what matters it if we have fire in our hearts—life, hope, to spur us forward to a bright tomorrow?"

"Bravely said," answered De Lisle, leaning forward in his chair and resting his head on his hands. Dietrick, sitting opposite him, noticed that his face was pinched and worn. There were dark rings round the eyes, his hair unkempt, clustered thickly over his forehead. Presently Dietrick drew a Louis from his pocket and held it out.

"See that!" he asked. "Starvation's on the other side of it. Verily, Strasbourg's mayor will come to beg his daily bread at the cathedral door, unless—"

"Yes?"

"Unless something happens. De Lisle, have you ever thought of marrying?"

"Many times. If there were no such thing as marriage I should not be here tonight. I have come to ask your consent to my speaking to—Violette."

Dietrick started slightly; then rose, and, going to the cupboard, produced a flagon of wine.

"I have two flagons left," he said. "Tonight we will break one." Then, as he proceeded to pour the crimson wine into the cups, he added: "For love Violette! So! And Violette loves you. I had it from her lips a few minutes ago."

De Lisle started to his feet.

"Thank heaven!" he cried. "You mean it—you speak the truth?"

"I am a magistrate," replied Dietrick, significantly. "Drink! Ah! that wine is good. Now we will come to terms. No doubt you have arrived at the conclusion that it is better to have a sitting grave for his majesty, or you would not mention marriage with the daughter of the king's best enemy."

"You mistake me, friend," answered De Lisle. "I was born a royalist, and I die one. My father perished for his sovereign, and bade me with his dying breath remain sacred to my oath and serve my king!" De Lisle ground down and kicked like dogs by a despotic monarch. "To the People! Brava!"

De Lisle sat sullen, with the cup tilted in his hand, staring into the fire, and the other, seeing that he had made an impression, bent low, and whispered quickly in his ear:

"You fool!" he said. "Don't you see how they suffer? Cannot you see what France is coming to? She is the sport of one man's whim. The people are broken; they are like sheep, to be driven and beaten just as Louis chooses. But rescue them—once rescue them—and France will dry her tears and smile again. Give them courage and hope—new life. You can do it; you have the power; that witchery of music—"

From the first a sense of hopelessness oppressed her, and as the weary days dragged by the feeling grew. Harold's cheerful letters did not comfort her. He was only conscious of the dangers that beset him—nothing beyond. So she was not surprised when the news of his death reached her; it seemed merely the inevitable for which she had long been prepared.

"I knew it!" she whispered, bending over the child. "I knew it all along. And I was not with him—six months the least—and not there at the last—when he wanted me most. It need not have been—it need not have been!"

That was the bitterest thought of all—he might have been alive, alive and well.

Soon Charlie Dicknell came to see her. He had been at

You can rouse them—heaven, you can!"

He had slipped to his knees, his face set with fierce, burning passion, and his hand resting on that of the youth crouching in the chair. The words that fell from his lips were uttered so impetuously and with such passionate emotion that they would have changed a heart of steel.

"Once rouse them from this lethargy and Violette is yours. Give them freedom, and they are your slaves. Music is in your soul, and you can give them a song that will stir them, wake them again, and make them men. Will you? You must! What is an oath when France is suffering because no one will lead her? You shall be her leader; your name shall go down to posterity as her maker. Drink!"

De Lisle drained his cup, and Dietrick replenished it, well knowing that two cups of wine would unsteady his guest's brain. Three, and music babbled from him like water from a sponge. Four, and his stubborn will would be broken. He walked across to the window, breathing quickly.

"Come here!" he cried at last. "And De Lisle, like one in a dream, obeyed, and stood by Dietrick's side as he held the curtains apart.

"See that woman?" said the latter hoarsely, pointing into the street. "See how she staggers and rocks with the cold and pain! They fed her at the cathedral steps two days ago. She is homeless. In the morning they will find her dead at the city wall. Cold and starvation! Now close your eyes and open them again. See! A woman stands there—it is Violette—she is starving, dying! One Louis to keep off that fate for her—unless you wake the people. Do that, and we can get our rights; we shall no longer be robbed by the king. We can work and get money for our labor. Think again. Which is it to be—the king or Violette?"

De Lisle recoiled and covered his eyes.

"Don't torture me!" he exclaimed. "God in heaven! What is an oath when a woman stands in the way?"

Dietrick stood looking at him, a smile of triumph on his face. Then, lifting his hand slowly, he pointed to a clavier standing in the corner.

"You will do it—tonight?" he asked.

"Tonight or never," responded De Lisle, staring at the instrument vaguely, as the expression slowly faded from his face. "Tonight I am not myself; tomorrow I am Rouget de Lisle, servant of the king!"

Dietrick walked across to the door. As he went out he paused and looked back into the room.

De Lisle, with trembling hands, was filling his cup brimful from the flagon. Then he lifted it above his head and cried aloud:

"To the People!"

He drained it off, but, even as the last drop passed his lips, the cup fell from his hands and flew to splinters on the floor.

Long into the night De Lisle sat on a stool at the clavier, his fingers wandering aimlessly up and down the keys. His feet were cold, but his head seemed on fire. Now and again little snatches of melody leaped from the instrument, so that a solitary passerby in the street passed and listened.

De Lisle drank deeper. His heart was beating tumultuously and he could barely see the white streak of keys through the haze that covered his eyes. Then he began to beat his feet on the ground to bring back the blood to them, and the sound, coupled with the music and the wine fumes that were encircling his brain, created fantastic pictures before his imagination. Beat! Beat! Beat! He saw a crowd marching, could hear in every beat the tramp of thousands of feet; the fierce passion on their faces urged him on.

Then, just as the dawn broke and crept through the curtains, melody and words together rushed through his brain like a torrent beyond restraint. And when he had played the song through, his head drooped and the music passed. Three hours later, when little Violette came into the room to draw the curtains, she found him lying at the foot of the clavier, one hand still resting on the mute keys. And in his sleep he smiled.

II.

WHEN De Lisle awoke the sunlight of morning was streaming through the window full into his face. He started up, a dazed expression in his eyes. Then he passed his hand wearily over his face.

"I think I must have slept," he said apologetically.

"Do you wonder at that, monsieur?" Violette asked. And he saw that her eyes were riveted on the wine stains on the floor. It takes a strong head to stand a flagon of good wine."

He shrank back, and sitting down on the stool watched her. He could find no words for answer; he was conscious only of his own shame and his own guilt.

The next moment Dietrick himself entered. There was a smile on his face, and crossing the room he put his hand on De Lisle's shoulder.

"At exactly twenty minutes past 4 this morning France was saved," he said. "I heard it. I lay awake in a fever of suspense waiting, then, when the music came, the melody that will stir all France. Then I slept, even as your music died away. In my dreams I saw the people rising as if with one accord to overthrow tyranny. And you were leading them on, you were at their head—you with that song. I saw the dawn of a great republic. Come, let us hear the chant again."

De Lisle stepped across to the clavier, and, running his fingers over the keys, struck at once into one of the most stirring refrains the world has ever known. Little Violette, crouching in the window, bowed her head in awe, for, as he played, De Lisle began to sing in his rich tenor voice the words he had composed to it. Once or twice Dietrick raised his eyes as if in gratitude to providence for such heaven-born music, then he would interlace his fingers, and at each lift of the passionate notes clench his teeth so tightly that the nails bit into the flesh. At last, his eyes wet with tears, he crept from the room.

The music ceased, and De Lisle, rising from the instrument, looked steadfastly at Violette. Then he went towards her with outstretched hands.

"Last night I was a beast of the field," he said. "Yet that song was the result. Why should a drunken debauch be sanctified, with such music as that? I have no excuse to make. I came to offer you my love, the true love of my heart and soul, and now I am more conscious of my own worthlessness than I have ever been before."

He had drawn a little away from her, but she rose and school and college with Harold, and the two had been the closest friends. Marion's calm frightened him. Save for the torture he had undergone, her face was like a mask, and only when he told her what he meant to do did she show any animation.

"I am going to the Philippines," he said. "I thought I would like to see—to find out all I can. I thought you would like me to—"

He stopped, for he had loved Harold dearly.

"Bring me photograph, Charlie," she said. "And find where he lies. Any little memento—"

And so Charlie started on his journey. It was a difficult task, for nearly all the available natives had been taken for the expedition, and most of the villages on his route were hostile. Not only was he unable to reckon on adding to his troop further up country, but he must travel with sufficient force to overcome any opposition that might be offered to his progress.

But at last he was ready, and he was glad. The state of inaction was unbearable, especially in the horrible climate which seemed to sap at his very life. He lingered long at the camp the night before he was to start, making quite sure that all was right. Then he hurried back to his hotel to write to Marion and tell her that he was off at last.

His room was in darkness when he entered, and he gave a muttered exclamation at the carelessness of his man. Then he stood still. Something, somebody, was in the room, and the horror brought by the certainty of some unknown and mysterious presence seized hold of him.

"Who's there?" he asked sharply. He hardly expected a reply, for he had a feeling that the presence was not human.

But an answer came, and the voice that spoke was that of his dead friend.

For a time the shock seemed to numb him—everything was blurred and indistinct. Slowly, very slowly, his dazed eyes cleared. He was holding Harold's hand—an actual hand of flesh and blood—listening to his incoherent words of joy and greeting.

Still a latent sense of horror, a strong feeling of unreality clung to the younger man. He fumbled for his match box. He should understand better when he could see.

"Boy!" said Harold. "Leave me in the dark for a little while."

Charlie complied, and the hot, brooding darkness seemed to close in round him, suddenly fraught with bewilderment, fear, and unreality.

And thus he heard the weird tale—how the expedition had been attacked in the dead of night by a barbarous horde of natives, how in the *saute qui peut* which followed, all had escaped save Harold, how he had been taken alive by the savages, and had suffered unnumbered torments at their hands. Of his escape he could give no clear account. His mind, partially impaired by horror and suffering, retained no distinct image of that terrible time, only he knew that at last he found himself at Manila. Here he entered the hospital under an assumed name, and was nursed back to life and the sanity he had so nearly lost. Here, too, he heard of Charles's expedition, for unnumbered times at Manila, and he had come with all haste to prevent him from pushing on into the dangers up country.

There was something inexpressibly eerie in the situation—sitting there in the dark, and listening to the story of a man risen, as it were, from death itself. The horror of what Harold had done through selfishness upon Charles's soul. The grimness of the story would haunt him till his dying day; what could it be to Marion? The thought came like a blow.

"You have written to Marion, of course," he said.

There was a pause, and when the answer came Harold's voice was strained and hard.

"No," he said.

Charlie was silent. His mind was groping, as it were, among the jumbled unrealities that seemed to crowd around him in the darkness. Presently Harold spoke again.

"To Marion, to all the world but you, and especially to Marion, I am dead—I must always be dead."

Fresh horror crept over Charlie, a sense of something more terrible to come.

"Why?" he asked; and his lips felt stiff and cold.

"Light the lamp. You will know why." There was an undertone of anguish in Harold's voice.

Charlie obeyed like one in a dream; he seemed to have lost all power of personal volition; an intangible terror possessed him utterly. When at last the light struggled out into the room, he turned as if fascinated, and as he gazed the beads of perspiration stood out upon his brow, and he trembled from head to foot.

It was only the wreck of a man in a low chair before him, half-maimed, grotesque—horrible. The face was hidden from sight by the one hand that remained.

"Your eye!" gasped Charlie. "Your face!"

Slowly Harold drew away his hand, and looked up. Only on one side were there any traces of the handsome boyish face he remembered. The rest—good heavens! what was it? Was it a trick of a disordered fancy? Could mind of man conjure up anything so hideous—so terrible? Was it possible that the image before him had ever been a human countenance? He felt his strained nerves giving way. With a quick gesture he extinguished the lamp; and the merciful darkness closed them in once more.

"Quick!" he cried. "The people are awake at last. Duquesne is at their head—Duquesne, the scoundrel who is only fit for the ax. They are accusing you of being a spy in the service of the king. I tried to reason with them, but Duquesne only shrieked a curse on you, and said you had audience of the king two days ago. I told him it was a lie."

De Lisle stood without flinching.

"A lie?" he repeated. "It is the truth. I was sent to the palace with a dispatch from my commanding officer."

"The truth? Mon Dieu! They will kill you for it!"

"I am not afraid."

Then, without speaking, De Lisle opened the window and stepped out upon the balcony, only to be met with a storm of howling and jeers.

"Citizens of Strasbourg!" he cried. "I greet you! Listen!"

The gaunt figure, standing but a moment ago a mark for the stones hurled at him by the infuriated mob, seemed as if by the majesty of his presence to cast a spell over the crowd, and the howling simmered down to a low murmur, like the breaking of the sea on a shingled coast.

Then, with one hand on his breast, De Lisle began to sing, so that his voice reverberated over the crowded streets, making every man who heard him a slave to the witchery of the music.

"To arms, citizens! Form your battalions!"

Ere the first verse ended the multitude forgot its temper and listened. Another verse followed, then another. The murmuring sank into silence and the silence in its turn gave way to a burst of cheering. Then the crowd began to disperse, singing as it went the refrain of the war song which today rouses the blood of France as it did at that moment—the refrain of the "Marseillaise."

De Lisle turned again into the room, a smile of triumph on his face.

"You see, I have conquered," he said to Violette. "And one year hence—one year from today—you shall say that too!"

And so an hour passed.

"What was it?" asked Charlie at last.

"Fire. They meant to burn me. I do not know how I escaped."

The sound of his voice was a relief. It was Harold's voice; the object that met the light was hardly to be mistaken.

"Marion is breaking her heart for you," said Charlie, almost mechanically.

"Better that than tied for life to this—"

"She loves you. She would gladly face it."

"She must never know. She shall never face it."

The unreal feeling of nightmare had come back. It lasted all through the long, silent Philippine night, as they sat and argued and discussed till all was settled. And all the time Charlie dreaded, more than he had ever dreaded anything in his life, the time when the screen of darkness should be lifted and he must again see the man at his side.

After all, perhaps, it was better to leave things as they were. The pension from the company would supply all Marion's needs. She had gone through the worst agony of her loss, and merciful time would heal the wound. She would be spared the horror he was enduring. Surely no woman who loved could gaze on her husband in that pitiful state and yet retain her sanity?

So Charlie Dicknell sailed alone for America by the next boat, bearing with him a few sprigs of the creeper that grew on the verandah outside his room at Manila. Harold had picked them, and it was easy to invent some tale about them. Nevertheless, he shrank from meeting Marion, and from answering her questions.

But he need not have feared it. Marion was calm, and she asked no questions, for her wound was too raw to allow her to speak freely on the subject.

"I could not find his grave," he said. "He fell into the hands of a hostile tribe. This creeper grew on the hotel at Manila. He held there before going up country."

"Is that all?"

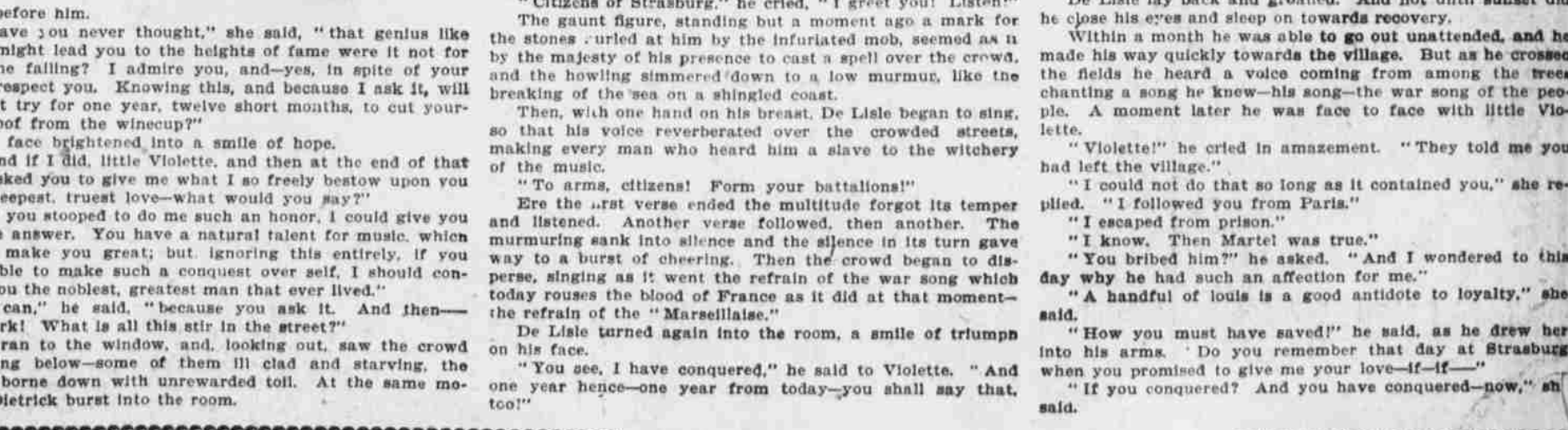
Her purple ringed eyes seemed to burn him.

"That is all," he said.

He felt that she did not believe him, that she divined he was holding something back. But she seemed to feel that it was only something which would add to her pain, and she accepted his merciful silence. They never alluded to the subject again, though they met often. But she was one of those women to whom time brings no balm. She could never forget.

And beyond an occasional letter to Charlie, Harold made no sign. Voluntarily he gave up everything for the sake of the woman he loved. No one knew what it cost him to do so.

For many years he staid in the Philippines, because he could trust himself no nearer home, and he supported him-



A VAIN SACRIFICE By Dorothy Baird.

WHEN Harold Granville was offered a post in the expedition to the Philippines there could be no thought of a refusal. The expedition was to be a commercial one, and as a missionary; the result of one man's whim. The people are broken; they are like sheep, to be driven and beaten just as Louis chooses. But rescue them—once rescue them—and France will dry her tears and smile again. Give them courage and hope—new life. You can do it; you have the power; that witchery of music—"

And so he accepted the post without demur, although his heart was heavy at the mere thought of leaving Marion. Marion agreed that it was best, though all the while she felt that the trial was greater than she could bear. The appointment was for five years, the doctors considering that no American could stand the climate for a longer period, and to both the young people those five years seemed to stretch away in boundless infinity. Yet neither complained, and both were outwardly calm and bright.

And the days fled by so swiftly. It seemed but a moment from the time of his appointment to the helpless agony of the last day and night at home. Marion broke down once, only once, and that was when he bent over her sleeping child to take his last kiss.

"I can't bear it!" she said, struggling with the terrible, tearful sobs that shook her frame. "Life is so short—and—and—we've only been married eighteen months!"

Harold dared not trust himself to comfort her as he wished. So he understood, and presently she followed, dressed ready to go with him to the docks. She was quite calm, and a heart broken smile was upon her lips.

From the first a sense of hopelessness oppressed her, and as the weary days dragged by the feeling grew. Harold's cheerful letters did not comfort her. He was only conscious of the dangers that beset him—nothing beyond. So she was not surprised when the news of his death reached her; it seemed merely the inevitable for which she had long been prepared.

"I knew it!" she whispered, bending over the child. "I knew it all along. And I was not with him—six months the least—and not there at the last—when he wanted me most. It need not have been—it need not have been!"

That was the bitterest thought of all—he might have been alive, alive and well.

Soon Charlie Dicknell came to see her. He had been at

self by writing on scientific subjects. But as time went on, the homesickness of an exile seized him in its inexorable clutches, and he began to wander in more familiar scenes. He could trust himself now—not that the desire to see Marion was weakened, that could never be—but years of battle with himself had given him the mastery. And so he roamed through Italy and Germany and France, every move bringing him nearer home, till at last he found himself in America.

He meant to bury himself in Chicago. It was vast enough to hide him, he thought; besides, he was completely beyond recognition. Time had added its disguise to the disfigurement; he was old beyond his years. He would be happier in Chicago than anywhere—among old scenes. And he would be nearer Marion. There was comfort even in that.

As soon as he arrived he went to see if Charlie was in town. The two men had not met since they parted, ten years before, and Harold yearned for a grasp of a friendly hand. It was a mere chance that Charlie would be in Chicago. But when Harold inquired at the hotel where he always staid he was directed to the usual suite of apartments.

Charlie was out at the time, and Harold amused himself with looking round the room. So many things were familiar—the black leather bag for papers, the traveling clock and writing case—he remembered them all so well. He stole a cigar out of a box on the mantel piece, and settled himself down before the fire. The lapse of years since he had last sat in that chair seemed suddenly to have dwindled down to a mere nothing.

Soon there came the sound of footsteps in the corridor, and the door handle turned abruptly.

"Be quick with the papers, please, Charlie," said a woman's voice. "As I told you, little Harold isn't well, and I must get home tonight." Then followed a startled exclamation when she became conscious of the figure in the chair before the fire.

Harold dared not move. He knew the voice only too well, and he prayed silently that Charlie might see him and take her away before she saw his face. But no—she silence that followed was broken by the rustle of a woman's skirts, coming ever closer and closer.

Not till she stood before him did he dare to raise his head. Then he saw her with the light of recognition welling slowly through the bewilderment in her eyes—only recognition and love, nothing more—no horror, no repulsion. The sight, of which the recollection could still turn Charlie sick and shuddering, had no power except to lift to the utmost the pity in her woman's heart. With a low, quivering cry she fell on her knees beside him, hugging the maimed arm to her breast and it was on the distorted, obliterated side of his face that her kisses lingered tenderest.

So Harold knew that his sacrifice was in vain.

