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## “PHROSO.”

### A TALE OF BRAVE DEEDS AND PERILOUS VENTURES.

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#### CHAPTER X.—*Continued.*

##### THE JUSTICE OF THE ISLAND.

THE old man with the picture made his way to the centre of the level spot. Thrice he raised the picture toward the sky, every one uncovering his head and kneeling down the while. He began to pray, but I did not listen to what he said; for by this time my attention had wandered from him and was fixed intently on a small group which occupied the centre of the raised bank. For there, sitting side by side, with the span of a foot or so between them, were Phroso and her cousin Constantine. On a rude hurdle, covered with a rug, at Constantine's feet, lay Vlacho, his face pale and his eyes closed. Behind Phroso stood my new acquaintance, Kortés, with one hand on the knife in his girdle and the other holding a long gun that rested on the ground. One figure I missed. I looked round for Constantine's wife, but she was nowhere to be seen. Then I looked again at Phroso. She was dressed in rich fine garments of white, profusely embroidered, but her face was paler even than Vlacho's; and when I sought her eyes she would not meet mine, but kept her gaze persistently lowered. Constantine sat motionless, with a frown on his brow, but a slight smile on

his lips, as he waited with an obviously forced patience through the long rigmarole of the old man's prayer.

It was evident that important business was to be transacted, but nobody seemed to be in a hurry to arrive at it. When the old priest had finished his prayer the cripples came and prostrated themselves before the sacred picture. No miracle, however, followed, and the priest took up the tale again, pouring forth a copious harangue, in which I detected frequent references to “the barbarians”—a term he used to denote my friends, myself, and all the world, apparently, except the islanders of Neopalía. Then he took his seat between Phroso and Constantine, who made room for him. I was surprised to see him assume so much dignity, but I presumed that he was treated with exceptional honor on the feast day. When he had taken his place, about twenty of the men came into the middle of the ring and began to dance, arranging themselves in a semi-circle, moving at first in slow rhythmical steps and gradually quickening their motions till they ended in a wonderful display of activity. During this performance Phroso and Constantine sat still and impassive, and Vlacho's lifeless face was scorched by the growing heat of the sun. The men who had been told off to watch me leant on their long guns, and I wondered wearily

when my part in this strangely mixed ceremony was to begin.

At last it came. The dance ended, the performers flung themselves fatigued on the turf, there was a hush of expectation, and the surrounding crowd of women and children drew closer in toward where the men had taken up their position in ranks on either side of the central seats. "Step forward," said one of my guards, and I, obeying him, lifted my hat and bowed to Phroso. Then, replacing my hat, I stood waiting the pleasure of the assembly. All eyes were fixed on Constantine, who remained seated and silent yet a little while longer. Then he rose slowly to his feet, bowed to Phroso, and pointed in a melodramatic fashion at Vlacho's body. But I was not in the least inclined to listen to an oration in the manner of Mark Antony over the body of Cæsar, and just as Constantine opened his mouth I observed loudly:

"Yes, I killed him, and the reason no man knows better than Constantine Stefanopoulos."

Constantine glared at me and, ignoring the bearing of my remark, broke into a eulogism on the dead innkeeper. It was coldly received. Vlacho's virtues were not recognized by any outburst of grief or indignation; indeed there was a smothered laugh or two when Constantine called him "a brave, true man." The orator detected his failure, and shifted his ground dexterously, passing on in rapid transition to ask in what quarrel Vlacho had died. Now he was gripping his audience; they drew closer; they became very still; angry and threatening glances were bent on me. Constantine lashed himself to fury as he cried: "He died for our island, which this barbarian claims as his!"

"He died—" I began; but a heavy hand on my shoulder and the menace of a knife cut short my protest. Demetri had come and taken his stand by me, and I knew that Demetri would jump at the first excuse to make my silence perpetual. So I held my peace, and the men caught up Constantine's last point and cried angrily: "Aye, he takes our island from us."

"Yes," said Constantine, "he has taken our island, and he claims it for his; he has killed our brethren, and put our lady out of her inheritance. What shall he suffer? For although we may not kill on St. Tryphon's day, we may judge on it, and the sentence may be performed at daybreak to-morrow. What shall this man suffer? Is he not worthy of death?"

It was what lawyers call a leading question, and it found its expected answer in a deep, fierce growl of "Death! Death!" Clearly the island was the thing, Vlacho's death merely an incidental affair of no great importance. I suppose that Phroso understood this as well as I, for now she rose suddenly. Constantine seemed disinclined to be interrupted, but she stood her ground firmly, though her face was very pale, and I saw her hands tremble; at last he sank back on to the bank.

"Why this turmoil?" she asked. "The stranger did not know our customs. He thought that the island was his by right, and when he was attacked, he defended himself. I pray you may all fight as bravely as he has fought."

"But the island, the island!" they cried.

"Yes," said she, "I also love the island. Well, he has given back the island to me. Behold his writing!" She held up the paper which I had given to her, and read the writing aloud in a clear voice. "What have you against him now?" she asked. "His people have loved the Hellenes. He has given back the island. Why shall he not depart in peace?"

The effect was great. The old priest seized the paper and scanned it eagerly; it was snatched from him and passed rapidly from hand to hand, greeted with surprised murmurs and intense excitement. Phroso stood watching its progress; Constantine sat with a heavy scowl on his face, and the frown grew yet deeper when I smiled at him with pleasant urbanity.

"It is true," said the priest, with a sigh of relief. "He has given back the island, and he need not die."

Phroso sat down; a sudden faintness seemed to follow on the strain, and I saw Kortes support her with his arm. But Constantine was not beaten yet; he sprang up and cried in a bitterly scornful tone:

"Aye, let him go—let him go to Rhodes and tell the governor that you sought to slay him and his friends, and that you extorted the paper from him by threat of death, and that he gave it in fear but did not mean it, and that you are turbulent, murderous men, who deserve great punishment. How guileless you are, O Neopaplians! But this man is not guileless. He can delude a girl. He can delude you also, it seems. Aye, let him go with his story to the governor at Rhodes, and do you hide in the rocks when the governor comes with his soldiers. Hide yourselves and hide your women, when the soldiers

come to set this man over your island and to punish you! Do you not remember when the governor came before? Is not the mark of his anger burnt upon your hearts?"

Hesitation and suspicion were roused again by this appeal. Phroso seemed bewildered at it, and gazed at her cousin with parted lips. Angry glances were again fixed on me. But the old priest rose, and stretched out his hand for silence.

"Let the man speak for himself," he said. "Let him tell us what he will do if we set him free. It may be that he will give us an oath not to harm us, but to go away peaceably to his own land, and leave us our island. Speak, sir. We will listen."

I was never much of a hand at a speech, and I did not enjoy being faced with the necessity of making one which might have such important results one way or the other. But I was quite clear in my own mind what I wanted to say; so I took a step forward, and began:

"I bear you Neopallians no malice," said I. "You've not succeeded in hurting me, and I suppose you've not caught my friends, or they would be here, prisoners, as I am a prisoner. Now, I have killed two good men of yours—Vlacho there and Spiro. I am content with that. I'll cry you quits. And I have given back the island to the Lady Euphrosyne; and what I give to a woman, aye, or to a man, I do not ask again, either of a governor, or of anybody else. Therefore your island is safe; and I will swear to that by what oath you will. And, so far as I have the power, no man or woman of all who stand around me shall come to any harm by reason of what has been done; and to that also I swear."

They had heard me intently, and they nodded in assent and approbation when the old priest, true to his part of peace-maker, looking round, said:

"He speaks well. He will not do what my lord feared. He will give us an oath. Why should he not depart in peace?"

Phroso's eyes sought mine, and she smiled sadly. Constantine was gnawing his finger-nails, and looking sour as man could look. It went to my heart to go on, for I knew that what I had to say next would give him another chance against me; but I preferred that to the only alternative.

"Wait," said I. "An oath is a sacred thing, and I swore an oath when I was there in the house of the Stefanopouloi.

There is a man here who has done murder on an old man, his kinsman, who has contrived murder against a woman; who has foully deceived a lady; with that man I'll not cry quits. For I swore that I would not rest till he paid the penalty of his crimes. By that oath I stand. Therefore, when I go from here, I shall, as Constantine Stefanopoulos has said, go to Rhodes and to the governor; and I shall pray him to send here to Neopallia and take that one man and hang him on the highest tree in the island; and I will come with the governor's men and see that thing done. Then I will go peaceably to my own land."

There was a pause of surprise. Constantine lifted his lids and looked at me; I saw his hand move toward a pocket. I suspected what lay in that pocket. I heard low eager whisperings and questions. At last the old priest asked in a timid hesitating voice:

"Who is this man of whom you speak?"

"There he is," said I. "There—Constantine Stefanopoulos."

The words were hardly out when Demetri clapped a large hairy hand across my mouth, whispering fiercely, "Hold your tongue." I drew back a step, and struck him fairly between the eyes. He went down. A hoarse cry rose from the crowd, but in an instant Kortes had leapt from where he stood behind Phroso and was by my side. I had some adherents also among the bystanders, for I had been bidden to speak freely, and Demetri had no authority to silence me.

"Yes, Constantine Stefanopoulos," I cried. "Did he not stab the old man after he had yielded? Did he not—"

"The old man sold the island," growled a dozen low, fierce voices, but the priest's rose high above them.

"We are not here to judge my Lord Constantine," said he, "but this man here."

"We all had a hand in the business of the old man," said Demetri, who had picked himself up, and was looking very vicious.

"You lie, and you know it," said I hotly. "He had yielded, and the rest had left off attacking him. But Constantine stabbed him. Why did he stab him?"

There came no answer, and Constantine caught at this advantage.

"Yes," he cried. "Why? Why should I stab him? He was stabbed by some one who did not know that he had

yielded." Then I saw his eye fall suddenly on Vlacho. Dead men tell no tales and deny no accusations.

"Since Vlacho is dead," Constantine went on, with wonderful readiness, "my tongue is loosed. It was Vlacho who in his hasty zeal stabbed the old man."

He had gained a point by this clever lie, and he made haste to press it to the full against me.

"This man," he exclaimed, "will go to Rhodes and denounce me! But did I kill the old man alone? Did I besiege the Englishmen alone? Will the governor be content with one victim? Is it not one head in ten when he comes to punish? Men of the island, it is your lives and my life against this man's life!"

They were with him again, and many shouted:

"Let him die, let him die!"

Then suddenly, before I could speak, Phroso rose and, stretching out her hands towards me, said:

"Promise what they ask, my lord. Save your own life, my lord. If my cousin be guilty, heaven will punish him."

But I did not listen even to her. With a sudden leap I was free from those who held me; for in the ranks of listening women I saw that old woman whom we had found watching by the dying lord of the island. I seized her by the wrist, and dragged her into the middle, crying to her:

"As God's above you, tell the truth! Who stabbed the old lord? Whose name did he utter in reproach when he lay dying?"

She stood shivering and trembling in the middle of the throng. The surprise of my sudden action held them all silent and motionless.

"Did he not say 'Constantine! You Constantine!'" I asked, "just before he died?"

The old woman's lips moved, but no sound came. She was half dead with fear, and fastened fascinated eyes on Constantine. He surveyed her with a rigid smile on his pale face.

"Speak the truth, woman," I cried. "Speak the truth."

"Yes; speak the truth," said Constantine, his eyes gleaming in triumph as he turned a glance of hatred on me. "Tell us truly who killed my uncle."

My witness failed me. The terror of Constantine, which had sealed her lips when I questioned her at the house, lay upon her still; the single word that came from her trembling lips was "Vlacho." Con-

stantine gave a cry of triumph, Demetri a wild shout; the islanders drew together; my chance looked black. But I made another effort.

"Swear her on the sacred picture," I cried. "Swear her on the picture; if she swears by the picture, and then says it was Vlacho, I am content to die as a false accuser."

My bold challenge won me a respite; it appealed to their rude sense of justice and their strong leaven of superstition.

"Yes, let her swear on the sacred picture," cried several. "Then we shall know."

The priest brought the picture to her, and swore her on it with great solemnity. She shook her head feebly, and fell to choked weeping. But the men round her were resolute, one of them menacing even Constantine himself when he began to ask whether her first testimony were not enough.

"Now you are sworn, speak," said the priest, solemnly.

A hush fell on us all. If she answered "Constantine," my life still hung by a thread; but by saying "Vlacho" she would cut the thread. She looked at me, at Constantine, then up to the sky, while her lips moved in rapid whispered prayers.

"Speak," said the priest to her gently.

Then she spoke in low fearful tones:

"Vlacho was there, and his knife was ready. But my lord yielded, and cried that he would not sell the island. And when they heard that they all drew back, and Vlacho with the rest. But my Lord Constantine struck; and when my lord lay dying it was the name of Constantine that he uttered in reproach." And the old woman reeled, and would have fallen, and then flung herself on the ground at Constantine's feet, crying: "Pardon, my lord, pardon. I could not swear falsely on the picture. Ah, my lord, mercy, mercy!"

But Constantine, though he had, as I do not doubt, a good memory for offences, could not afford to think of the old woman now. One instant he sat still; then he sprang to his feet, crying:

"Let my friends come round me. Yes, if you will, I killed the old man. Was not the deed done? Was not the island sold? Was not he bound to this man here? The half of the money had been paid! If he had lived, and if this man had lived, they would have brought soldiers and constrained us. So I slew him; and therefore I have sought to kill the stranger also. Who blames me? If there be any, let him



stand by the stranger, and let my friends stand by me. Have we not had enough talk? Is it not time to act? Who loves Neopalia? Who loves me?"

While he spoke many had been gathering round him. With every fresh appeal more flocked to him. There were but three or four left now, wavering between him and me, and Kortés alone stood by my side.

"Are you children that you shrink from me because I struck a blow for our country? Was the old man to escape and live to help this man to take our island? Yes, I, Constantine Stefanopoulos, though I was blood of his blood, I killed him. Who blames me? Shall we not finish the work? There the stranger stands! Men of the island, shall we not finish the work?"

"Well, it's come at last," thought I to myself. And I said to Kortés: "It's no use. Don't get yourself into trouble." Then I folded my arms and waited. But I do not mean to say that I did not turn a little pale. Perhaps I did. At any rate I contrived to show no fear, except in that.

The islanders looked at one another and then at Constantine. Friend Constantine had been ready with his stirring words, but he did not rush first to the attack. Besides myself there was Kortés, who had not left his place beside me in spite of my invitation to him. And Kortés looked as though he could give an account of one or two. But the hesitation among Constantine's followers did not last long. Demetri was no coward, at all events, although he was as big a scoundrel as I have known. He carried a great sword that he must have got from the collection on the walls of the hall, and he brandished it now over his head, and rushed straight at me. It seemed to be all over, and I thought that the best I could do was to take it quietly; so I stood still. But on a sudden I was pulled back by a powerful arm. Kortés flung me behind him, and stood between me and Demetri's rush. An instant later ten or more of them were round Kortés. He struck at them, but they dodged him. One cried, "Don't hurt Kortés;" and another, running agilely round, caught his arms from behind, and, all gathering round him, they wrested his weapons from him. My last champion was disarmed; he had but protracted the bitterness of death for me by his gallant attempt. I fixed my eyes steadily on the horizon and waited. The time of my waiting must have been infinitesimal, yet I seemed to wait some

little while. Then Demetri's great sword flashed suddenly between me and the sky. But it did not fall. Another flash came, the flash of white, darting across between me and the grim figure of my assailant. And Phroso, pale, breathless, trembling in every limb, yet holding her head bravely, and with anger gleaming in her dark eyes, said:

"If you kill him you must kill me. I will not live if he dies."

Even Demetri paused; the rest gave back. I saw Constantine's hatchet-face peering in gloomy wrath and trembling excitement from behind the protecting backs of his stout adherents. But Demetri, holding his sword poised for the stroke, growled angrily:

"What is his life to you, lady?"

Phroso drew herself up. Her face was away from me; but as she spoke I saw a sudden flush of red spread over her neck; yet she spoke steadily and boldly, in a voice that all could hear: "His life is my life. For I love him as I love my life—ah, and God knows, more, more, more!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE LAST CARD.

IN most families, at least among those that have any recorded history to boast of or to deplore, there is a point of family pride. With one it is grace of manner, with another courage, with a third statecraft, with a fourth chivalrous loyalty to a lost cause or a fallen prince. Tradition adds new sanction to the cherished excellence. It becomes the heirloom of the house, the mark of the race; in the end, maybe, a superstition before which greater things go down. If the men cling to it they are compensated by license in other matters; the women are held in honor if they bear sons who do not fail in it. It becomes a new god, with its worship and its altar; and often the altar is laden with costly sacrifices. Wisdom has little part in the cult, and the virtues that are not hallowed by hereditary recognition are apt to go unhonored and unpractised. I have heard it said, and seen it written, that we Wheatleys have, as a stock, few merits and many faults. I do not expect my career—if, indeed, I had such an ambitious thing as a career in my life's wallet—to reverse that verdict. But no man has said or written of us that we do not keep faith. Here is our pride and

palladium. Promises we neither break nor ask back. We make them sometimes lightly; it is no matter; substance, happiness, life itself, must be spent in keeping them. I had learned this at my mother's knee. I had myself seen thousands and thousands poured forth to a rascally friend on the strength of a schoolboy pledge which my father made. "Folly, folly!" cried the world. Whether it were right or not, who knows? We wrapped ourselves in the scanty mantle of our one virtue, and went our way. We always—but a man grows tedious when he talks of his ancestors. He is like a doting old fellow, garrulous about his lusty youth. Enough of it. Yet not more than enough; for I carried this religion of mine to Neopalia, and built there an altar to it, and laid on the altar the rarest sacrifice. Was I wrong? I do not care to ask.

"My life is his life. For I love him as my life." The words rang in my ears, seeming to echo again through the silence that followed them; and they were answered in my heart by beats of leaping blood. "Was it true?" flashed through my brain. Was it truth or stratagem, a noble falsehood or a more splendid boldness? I did not know. The words were strange, yet to me they were not incredible. Had we not lived through ages together in those brief full hours in the old gray house? And the parting in the quiet evening had united while it feigned to sever. I believe I shut my eyes, not to see the slender, stately form that stood between death and me. When I looked again, Demetri and his angry comrades had fallen back, and stood staring in awkward bewilderment; but the women had crowded in upon us, with eager excited faces. One broad-browed, kindly creature had run to Phroso, and caught her round the waist, and was looking in her eyes, and stroking her hand, and murmuring soft woman's comforting. Demetri took a step forward.

"Come if you dare!" cried the woman, bold as a legion of men. "Is a dog like you to come near my Lady Euphrosyne?" And Phroso turned her face away from the men and hid it in the woman's bosom.

Then came a cold rasping voice, charged with a bitter anger that masqueraded as amusement.

"What is this comedy, cousin?" asked Constantine. "You love this man! You, the lady of the island—you, who have pledged your troth to me?" He turned to the people, spreading out his hands.

"You all know," said he, "you all know that we are pledged to one another."

A murmuring assent greeted his words. "Yes, they are betrothed," I heard half a dozen mutter, as they directed curious glances at Phroso. "Yes, in the old lord's life they were betrothed."

Then I thought it time for me to take a hand in the game; so I stepped forward, in spite of Kortès's restraining arm.

"Be careful," he whispered. "Be careful."

I looked at him. His face was drawn and pale, like the face of a man in pain, but he smiled still in his friendly open fashion.

"I must speak," I said; and I walked up to within two yards of Constantine, the islanders giving way before me; then I said loudly and distinctly:

"Was that same betrothal before you married your wife or afterwards?"

He sprang half way up from his seat, as if to leap on me; but he sank back again, his face convulsed with passion, and his fingers picking furiously at the turf by his side. "His wife!" went round the ring in amazed whisperings.

"Yes, his wife," said I. "The wife who was with him when I saw him in my country; the wife who came with him here; who was in the cottage on the hill; whom Vlacho would have dragged by force to her death; who lay last night yonder in the guardhouse. Where is she, Constantine Stefanopoulos? Or is she dead now, and you free to wed the Lady Euphrosyne? Is she alive, or has she by now learnt the secret of the Stefanopouloi?"

I do not know which made more stir among the people, my talk of his wife or my hint about the secret. They crowded round me, hemming me in. I saw Phroso no more; but Kortès pushed his way to my side. Then the eyes of all turned on Constantine, where he sat with face working and nails fiercely plucking the turf.

"What is this lie?" he cried. "I know nothing of a wife. Yes, there was a woman in the cottage."

"Aye, there was a woman in the cottage," said Kortès. "And she was in the guardhouse, but I did not know who she was, and I had no commands concerning her. This morning she was gone."

"That woman is his wife," said I. "But he and Vlacho had planned to kill her, in order that he might marry your lady and have your island for himself."

Demetri suddenly cried, with a great appearance of horror and disgust:

"Shall he live to speak such slanders against my lord?"

But Demetri gained no attention. I had made too much impression.

"Who was the woman, then?" said I. "And where is she?"

Constantine, tricky and resourceful, looked again on the dead Vlacho.

"I may not tell my friend's secrets," said he with an admirable assumption of honor. "And a foul blow has sealed Vlacho's lips."

"Yes," cried I, "Vlacho killed the old lord, and Vlacho brought the woman! Indeed Vlacho serves my lord as well dead as when he lived! For now his lips are sealed. Come then—Vlacho bought the island, and Vlacho slew Spiro, and now Vlacho has slain himself. Neither Constantine nor I have done anything, but it is all Vlacho, the useful Vlacho, Vlacho, Vlacho!"

Constantine's face was a sight to see, and he looked no pleasanter when my irony wrung smiles from some of the men round him, while others bit their lips to stop smiles that sought to come.

"O faithful servant!" I cried, apostrophizing Vlacho. "Heavy are thy sins! Mayst thou find mercy for them!"

I did not know what cards Constantine held. If he had succeeded in spiriting away his wife by fair means or foul, he had still the better chance; but if she were still free, alive and free, then he played a perilous game, and was liable to be utterly confounded. Yet he was forced to action. I had so moved the people that they looked for more than mere protests from him.

"The stranger who came to steal our island," said he, skilfully prejudicing me by this description, "asks me where the woman is. But I ask it of him—where is she? For it stands with him to put her before you, that she may tell you whether I, Constantine Stefanopoulos, am lying to you. Yet how long is it since you doubted the word of the Stefanopouloi, and believed strangers rather than them?"

His appeal won on them. They met it with murmured applause.

"You know me, you know my family," he cried. "Yet you hearken to the desperate words of a man who fights for his life with lies! How shall I satisfy you? For I have not the woman in my keeping. But have you not heard me when I swore my love for my cousin before you and the old lord who is dead? Am I a man to be forsworn? Shall I swear to you now?"

The current began to run strongly with

him. He had called to his aid patriotism, and the old clan loyalty that bound the Neopalians to his house, and they did not fail him. The islanders were ready to trust him if he would pledge himself to them.

"Swear, then," they cried. "Swear to us on the sacred picture that what the stranger says is a lie."

"On the sacred picture?" said he. "Is it not too great and holy an oath for such a matter? Is not my word enough for you?"

But the old priest stepped forward.

"It is a great matter," said he, "for it touches closely the honor of your house, my lord, and on it hangs the man's life. Is any oath too great when honor and life lie in the balance? Let your life stand against his, for he who swears thus and falsely has no long life in Neopalía; here we guard the honor of St. Tryphon."

"Yes, swear on the picture," cried the people. "It is enough if you swear on the picture!"

I could see that Constantine was not in love with the suggestion, but he accepted it with tolerable grace, acquiescing in the old priest's argument with a half-disdainful shrug. The people greeted his consent with obvious pleasure, save only Demetri, who regarded him with a doubtful expression. Demetri knew the truth, and though he would cut a throat with a light heart, he would shrink from a denial of the deed when sworn on the holy picture. Truly conscience works sometimes in strange ways, making the lesser sin the greater, and dwarfing vile crimes to magnify their venial brethren. No, Demetri would not have sworn on the picture; and when he saw it brought to Constantine he shrank away from his leader, and I saw him privily and furtively cross himself. But Constantine, freed by the scepticism he had learnt in the West to practise the crimes the East had taught him, made little trouble about it, and when the ceremonies that had attended the old woman's oath earlier in the day had been minutely, solemnly, and tediously repeated, he swore as bravely as you please before them, and thereby bid fare to write my death warrant in his lying words. For when the oath was done, the most awful names in heaven standing witness to his perjury, and he ceased, saying, "I have sworn," the eyes of the men round him turned on me again, and seemed to ask me silently what plea for mercy I could now advance. But I caught at my chance.

"Let Demetri swear," said I coolly, "that so far as his knowledge goes the truth is no other than what the Lord Constantine has sworn."

"A subterfuge!" cried Constantine impatiently. "What should Demetri know of it?"

"If he knows nothing, it is easy for him to swear," said I. "Men of the island, a man should have every chance for his life. I have given you back your island. Do this for me. Make Demetri swear. Ah, look at the man! See, he shakes, his face grows pale, there is a sweat on his brow. Why, why? Make him swear!"

I should not have prevailed without the assisting evidence of the villain's face. It was as I said: he grew pale, and sweated on the forehead; he cleared his throat hoarsely, but did not speak. Constantine's eyes said, "Swear, fool, swear!"

"Let Demetri also swear," cried some.

"Yes, it is easy, if he knows nothing." Suddenly Phroso sprang forward.

"Yes, let him swear," she cried. "Who is chief here? Have I no power? Let him swear!" And she signed imperiously to the priest.

They brought the picture to Demetri. He shrank from it as though its touch would kill him.

"In the name of Almighty God, as you hope for mercy; in the name of our Lord the Saviour, as you pray for pity; in the name of the Most Blessed Spirit whose word is truth; by the Most Holy Virgin; and by our Holy Saint," began the old man. But Demetri cried hoarsely:

"Take it away; take it away! I will not swear."

"Let him swear," said Phroso; and this time the whole throng caught up her command, and echoed it in fierce insistence.

"Let him swear to tell the whole truth of what he knows, hiding nothing, according to the terms of the oath," said the priest, pursuing his ritual.

"He shall not swear," cried Constantine, springing up. But he spoke to deaf ears, and won only looks of new-born suspicion.

"It is the custom of the island," they growled. "It has been done in Neopalatia time out of mind."

"Yes," said the priest, "time out of mind has a man been free to ask this oath of whomsoever he suspected. Swear, Demetri, as our lady and our law bid." And he ended the words of the oath.

Demetri looked round, to right, to left, and to right again. He sought escape.

There was none. His way was barred. His arms fell by his side.

"Will you let me go unharmed if I speak the truth?" he asked, sullenly.

"Yes," answered Phroso, "if you speak the whole truth, you shall go unhurt."

The excitement was intense now, for Demetri took the oath, Constantine watching with pale, strained face. Then followed a moment's utter silence, broken an instant later by an irresistible outbreak of wondering cries, for Demetri said, "Follow me," and turned and began to walk in the direction of the town. "Follow me," he said again. "I will tell the truth. I have served my lord well, but a man's soul is his own. No master buys a man's soul. I will tell the truth."

The change in feeling was witnessed by what happened. At a sign from the priest, Kortés and another each took one of Constantine's arms and raised him. He was trembling now, and hardly able to set one foot before the other. The dogs of justice were hard on his heels, and he was a craven at heart. Thus, bearing him with us, in procession we followed Demetri from the place of assembly back to the steep narrow street that ran up from the sea. On the way none spoke; but in the middle I walked, and in front of me went Phroso, the woman who had come to comfort her still holding her arm in hers.

On Demetri led us with quick, decisive steps; but when he came to the door of the inn which had belonged to that Vlacho whose body lay now deserted on the level grass by the seashore, he halted abruptly, then turned and entered the inn. We followed, Constantine's supporters bringing him also with us. We passed through the large lower room and out of the house again, into an enclosed yard bounded on the seaward side by a low stone wall, toward which the ground sloped rapidly. But here Demetri stopped.

"By my oath," said he, "and as God hears me, I knew not who this woman was; but last night Vlacho bade me come with him to the cottage on the hill, and, if he called me, I was to come and help him to carry her to the house of my Lord Constantine. He called, and I, coming with Kortés, found Vlacho dead. And Kortés would not suffer me to touch the lady, but bade me stay with Vlacho. But when Kortés was gone and Vlacho dead, I ran and told my lord what had happened. And my lord was greatly disturbed, and bade me come with him, and we came together



to the town, and passed together by the guardhouse."

"Lies, foul lies!" cried Constantine; but they bade him be quiet, and Demetri continued in a composed voice:

"There Kortés watched, and my lord asked him whom he held prisoner; and when he heard that it was the Englishman, he sought to prevail on Kortés to deliver him up; but Kortés would not without the command of the Lady Euphrosyne. Then my lord said: 'And have you no other prisoner, Kortés?' Kortés answered: 'There is a woman here whom we found in the cottage; but you gave me no orders concerning her, my lord, neither you, nor the lady of the island.' 'I care nothing about her,' said my lord, with a shrug of his shoulders, and he and I turned away, and walked some paces down the street. Then, at my lord's bidding, I crouched down with him in the shadow of a house and waited. Presently, when the clock had struck two o'clock, we saw Kortés come out from the guardhouse, and the woman was with him. Now, we were but fifty feet from them, and the wind was blowing from them to us, and I heard what the lady said."

"It happened as he says," interrupted Kortés in a grave tone. "I promised secrecy, but I will speak now."

"I must go to the Lady Euphrosyne," said she to Kortés," continued Demetri; "'I have something to say to her.' Kortés answered: 'She is lodging at the house of the priest. It is the tenth house on the left hand as you mount the hill.' She thanked him, and he turned back into the guardhouse, and we saw no more of him. But the lady came slowly and fearfully up the road, and my lord beside me laughed gently, and twisted a silk scarf in his hand; there was nobody in the street, except my lord and the lady and me. And as she went by, my lord sprang out on her, and twisted the scarf across her mouth before she could cry out. Then he and I lifted her and carried her swiftly down the street, and we came here to Vlacho's inn; the door was open, for Vlacho had gone out, and it had not yet become known that he would never return. We carried her swiftly through the house, and brought her where we stand now, and laid her on the ground; my lord tied her hands and feet so that she lay still, and her mouth was already gagged. Then my lord drew me aside, and took five pieces of gold from his purse and said, looking into my eyes, 'Is it enough?' I understood, and said, 'It is

enough, my lord,' and he pressed my hand and left me, without going again near the woman. And I, having put the five pieces in my purse, drew my knife from its sheath, and came and stood over the woman, looking how I might best strike the blow. She was gagged and tied, and lay motionless. But the night was bright, and I saw her eyes fixed on mine. There I stood long by her, with my knife in my hands, and then I knelt down by her to strike. But her eyes burnt into my heart, and suddenly I seemed to hear Satan by my side chuckling and whispering, 'Strike, Demetri, strike! Art thou not damned already? Strike!' And I did not dare to look to the right or the left, for I felt the fiend by me. So I shut my eyes and grasped my knife, but the lady's eyes drew mine open again, although I struggled to keep them shut. Now many devils seemed to be round me, and they were gleeful, saying, 'Oh, he is ours! Yes, Demetri is ours! He will do this thing, and then surely he is ours!' Suddenly I sobbed, and when my sob came, a gleam lighted the lady's eyes, and her eyes looked like the eyes of the Blessed Virgin in the church, and I could not strike her. I flung down my knife, and fell to sobbing. And as I sobbed, the noise of the devils ceased, and I seemed to hear, instead, a voice from above that said to me very softly: 'Have I died to keep thy soul alive and thou thyself wouldst kill it, Demetri?' I know not if any one spoke, but the night was very still, and I was afraid, and I cried low, 'Alas, I am a sinner.' But the voice said, 'Sin no more.' And the eyes of the lady implored me. But then they closed, and I saw that she had fainted. I raised her gently in my arms, and carried her gently across this piece of ground where we stand."

He ended, and stood for a moment silent and motionless; none of us spoke. "And I took her," said he, "there where the wall ends; for I knew that Vlacho had his larder there. Now the door of the larder was locked, but I set the lady down, and returned and took my knife from the ground, and I forced the lock, and took her in and laid her on the floor of the larder. Then I returned to the house, and called to Panayiota, Vlacho's daughter, with whom I was acquainted. When she came I charged her to watch the lady till I came again, saying that Vlacho had bidden me bring her here. For I meant to return in a few hours and carry the lady to some place of safety, if I could find one. And Panayiota, fearing Vlacho, and having an

affection for me, promised faithfully to keep the lady safe. Then I ran after my lord, and found him at the house, and told him that the deed was done, and that I had hidden the body here; and I craved leave to return and make a grave for the body, or carry it to the sea. But he said 'It will be soon enough in the evening. We shall be quit of troubles by the evening. Does any one know?' And I answered rashly, 'Panayiota knows.' Then he was enraged, fearing Panayiota would betray us. But when he heard that she and I were lovers he was appeased; yet I could not find means to leave and return to the lady."

Demetri ended. Phroso, without a look at any one of us, stepped lightly to the spot he had described. There was a low hut there, with a stout wooden door. Phroso knocked on it, but there came no answer. She beckoned to Kortés, and he, coming, wrenched open the door, which seemed to have been fastened by some makeshift arrangement. Kortés disappeared for an instant; then he came out

again, and motioned with his hand. We crowded round the door, I among the first. And there, indeed, was a strange sight. For on the floor, propped against the side of the hut, sat a buxom girl; her eyes were closed, her mouth open, and she breathed in heavy regular breaths. Panayiota had watched faithfully all night, and now slept at her post. Yet her trust was not betrayed; on her lap rested the head of the lady whom Demetri had not found it in his heart to kill; the bonds with which she had been bound lay on the floor by her; and she also, pale and with shadowed rings about her eyes, slept the sleep of utter exhaustion and weariness. We stood looking at the strange sight, a sudden gleam of peace and homely kindness breaking across the dark cloud of angry passions.

"Hush!" said Phroso, very softly. She stepped forward and fell on her knees by the sleeping woman, and she lightly kissed Constantine's wife on the brow. "Praise be to God!" said Phroso softly, and kissed her again.

(To be continued.)

## LITERARY NOTES.



W. E. H. LECKY.

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remained a member of the institution, contributing to its reputation by his works. Last year, however, his university asked a new service of him. Like all the universities of Great Britain, Dublin has a representative in Parliament. Hitherto the Dublin member has usually been a lawyer, but at the last election, December, 1895, Mr. Lecky was returned.

Mr. Lecky's province in Parliament is plain from "Democracy and Liberty"; he stands for experience. It is his business, when legislators attempt an experiment which other generations have repeatedly tried, to call in the past. If Dublin University has returned a representative who will show as conclusively in practice that history has a political value as he shows it in "Democracy and Liberty," then Mr. Lecky will have done his generation another great benefit—he will have shown it how to give the long-needed perspective to political discussion.

MR. WILLIAM ASTOR CHANLER has just published, through Messrs. Macmillan & Co., a faithful account of his journey of two or three years ago through "jungle and desert" into one of the most difficult and dangerous parts of Africa. A two years' turn at African exploration achieved and described by a fit man, which Mr. Chanler preëminently is, cannot well lack interest. But quite as engaging to one's fancy as the adventures set forth, is the fact that a young man born to the choice of a life of ease and leisure, should willingly resign it in favor of an enterprise entailing the severest labors possible to mind and body, and even the daily hazard of life itself.

This was Mr. Chanler's second expedition into the heart of Africa. He prepared for it with the greatest care and from full knowledge of his needs; and he had the coöperation and companionship of Lieutenant Von Höhnelt, of the Austrian navy, who had also had experience in African travel. Guides and porters deserted; and many times Mr. Chanler and his company were in full view of death from thirst, hunger, fever, native arrows, and wild beasts. Yet they seem to have reached the points they aimed at, and accomplished the ends they had in view, with speed and precision. Mr. Chanler even came off safely, and succeeded in getting his game,



WM. ASTOR CHANLER.  
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