

# FAIR MARGARET.\*

BY F. MARION CRAWFORD,

AUTHOR OF "MR. ISAACS," "CORLEONE," "IN THE PALACE OF THE KING," ETC.

## SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MARGARET DONNE is an English girl, whose parents are dead, and who lives with Mrs. Rushmore, an American lady, in Versailles. Margaret's mother, who was Mrs. Rushmore's close friend, was also an American, and when she married Professor Donne, of Oxford, she expected to inherit a fortune. Her father, however—Margaret's grandfather—met ill-luck, and died leaving nothing but a claim upon Alvah Moon, a California millionaire to whom he had assigned a valuable patent. Mrs. Rushmore has brought suit against Moon on Margaret's behalf, but there seems slight chance of success.

Margaret, who possesses a remarkably good voice, is determined to earn her own living, a project which Mrs. Rushmore strongly but vainly opposes. Her teacher, Mme. de Rosa, sends her to the famous prima donna, Mme. Bonanni, for advice. Generously admiring the girl's talent, the Bonanni introduces her to Schreiermeyer, manager at the Opéra, who, to her intense delight, offers her an engagement.

At the prima donna's house on the Avenue Hoche she also meets Constantine Logotheti, a Greek financier, who is deeply impressed with her beauty. Having secured an introduction to Mrs. Rushmore, Logotheti calls at the house in Versailles and proposes marriage to Margaret. Refusing, and pressed for her reason, she admits that there is "some one else." Her situation, which she does not explain further, is somewhat peculiar. There is a strong affection between her and a man whom she knows as Edmund Lushington, a successful young critic, but he has told her that that is not his real name, that he has a secret which he cannot disclose, and that they can never be more than friends. In visiting Mme. Bonanni she discovers his secret—he is the prima donna's son; but though she tells him that this need be no bar between them, and pleads with him not to leave her, he only repeats his farewell.

Logotheti, a man who is not in the habit of letting his plans fail, does not accept Margaret's refusal as an end of his hopes. Again calling at Mrs. Rushmore's, he surprises the American lady by telling her that he has purchased Alvah Moon's interest in the disputed patent, and by there and then giving her a check for five hundred thousand dollars in settlement of Margaret Donne's claim. He asks her to say nothing of his part in the transaction, and when Mrs. Rushmore informs Margaret of her good fortune she tells her that the money came from "a company." The English girl is now above the necessity of singing for a livelihood, but to Mrs. Rushmore's disgust she refuses to throw up her engagement.

Lushington, meanwhile, has not left Paris. He takes another lodging, disguises himself, and watches Logotheti's house. He sees Margaret go to lunch there with Mme. de Rosa, and finds that the girl is using the rich Greek's motor-car in going to and fro between Versailles and her rehearsals. Further, he makes the unpleasant discovery that the man who drives the car, ostensibly Logotheti's chauffeur, is really the Greek himself, the disguise being assumed in order to deceive the punctilious Mrs. Rushmore.

## XV (Continued).

LUSHINGTON also ascertained that after one more rehearsal at the Opéra, Margaret did not go there again. The newspapers informed him very soon that Schreiermeyer had got his own company together and had borrowed the stage of an obscure theater in the outskirts of Paris for the purpose of rehearsing. It had been an advantage for the young prima donna to sing two or three times with the great orchestra of the Opéra, but the arrangement could not continue. Margaret's début was to be in July in the opera-house of a Belgian city.

Lushington was certain that Margaret had been at least once again to Logotheti's house with Mme. De Rosa, but he did not believe that she had stayed to

luncheon, for she had not remained in the house much over half an hour.

During all this time he made no attempt to communicate with her, and was uncomfortably aware that Logotheti was having it all his own way. He yielded to a morbid impulse in watching the two, since no good could come of it for himself or Margaret. Almost every time he went out on the Versailles road he knew that he would see them together before he came back, and he knew equally well that he could do nothing to separate them. He wondered what it was that attracted such a woman as Margaret Donne to such a man, and with a humility which his friends and enemies would have been far from suspecting in him he honestly tried to compare himself with Logotheti and to define the points in which the latter had the advantage.

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Very naturally, he failed to discover them. In spite of what philosophers tell us, most of us know ourselves pretty well. The conclusive and irrefutable proof of this is that we always know when we are not telling, or showing, the truth about ourselves, as, for instance, when we are boasting or attributing to ourselves some gift, some knowledge, or some power which we really do not possess. We also know perfectly well when our impulses are good and when they are bad, and can guess approximately how much courage we have in reserve for doing the one, and how far our natural cowardice will incline us to do the other. But we know very little indeed about other people, and almost always judge them by ourselves, because we have no other convenient standard. A great many men are influenced in the same general way by the big things in life, but one scarcely ever finds two men who are similarly affected by the little things from which all great results proceed. Mark Antony lost the world for a woman, but it was for a woman that Tallien overthrew Robespierre and saved France.

So Lushington's comparison came to nothing at all, and he was no nearer to a solution of his problem than before.

Then came the unexpected, and it furnished him with a surprisingly simple means of comparing himself with his rival in the eyes of Margaret herself.

There are several roads from Paris to Versailles, as every one knows, leaving the city on opposite sides of the Seine. Hitherto Logotheti had always taken the one that leads to the right bank, along the Avenue de Versailles to the Porte St. Cloud. Another follows the left bank by Bas Meudon, but the most pleasant road goes through the woods Fausses Reposes.

One morning, when he knew that there was to be a rehearsal, Lushington bicycled out by the usual way without meeting the motor-car. It naturally occurred to him that Logotheti must have returned by another road. Whether he would bring Margaret out again by the same way or not was of course uncertain, but Lushington resolved to try the Fausses Reposes on the chance of meeting the car, after waiting in Versailles as long as he thought the rehearsal might last.

He set out again about half-past one. The road is in parts much more lonely than the others, especially in the woods, and is much less straight; there are sharp turns to the right and left in several

places. Lushington did not know the road very well, and hesitated more than once, going slowly and fast by turns, and at the end of half an hour he felt almost sure that he had either lost his way or that Logotheti was coming back by another route.

## XVI.

MARGARET knew by this time that Logotheti was really very much in love; she was equally sure that she was not, and that when she encouraged him she was yielding to a rather complicated temptation that presented elements of amusement and of mild danger. In plain English, she was playing with the man, though she guessed that he was not the kind of a man who would allow himself to be played with very long.

There are not many young women who could resist such a temptation under the circumstances, and small blame to them. Margaret had done nothing to attract the Greek, and she was too unsophisticated to understand the nature of her involuntary influence over him. He was still young, he was unlike other men, and he was enormously rich; a little familiarity with him had taught her that there was nothing vulgar about him below the surface, and he treated her with all the respect she could exact when she chose to put herself in his power. The consequence was that she sometimes could not resist making little experiments, just to see how far he would run on the chain by which she held him. Besides, she was flattered by his devotion.

It was not a noble game that she was playing with him, but in real life very few young men and women of two-and-twenty are "noble" all the time. A good many never are at all; and Margaret had at least the excuse that the victim of her charms was no simple, sensitive soul with morbid instincts of suicide, like the poor youth who cut his throat for *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*, but a healthy millionaire of five-and-thirty who enjoyed the reputation of having seen everything and done most things in a not particularly well-spent life.

Besides, she ran a risk, and knew it. The victim might turn at any moment, and perhaps rend her. Sometimes there was a quick glance in the almond-shaped eyes which sent a little thrill of not altogether unpleasant fear through her. She had seen a woman put her head into a wild beast's mouth, and she knew that the woman was never quite sure of get-

ting it out again. That was part of the game, and the woman probably enjoyed the sensation and the doubt, since playing for one's life is much more exciting than playing for one's money. Margaret began to understand the lion-tamer's sensations, and not being timid she almost wished that her lion would show his teeth. She gave herself the luxury of wondering what form his wrath would take when he was tired of being played with.

He was already approaching that point on the day when Lushington was looking out for him on the road through the Fausses Reposes woods. When they were well away from the city, he slackened his speed as usual, and began to talk.

"I wish," he said, "that you would sometimes be in earnest. Won't you try?"

"You might not like it," Margaret answered carelessly. "For my part, I sometimes wish that you were not quite so much in earnest yourself."

"Do I bore you?"

"No. You never bore me, but you make me feel wicked, and that is very disagreeable. It is inconsiderate of you to give me the impression that I am a sort of Lorelei, coolly luring you to your destruction! Besides, you would not be so easily destroyed, after all. You are able to take care of yourself, I fancy."

"Yes. I think my heart will be the last of me to break." He laughed and looked at her. "But that is no reason why you should try to twist my arms and legs off, as boys do to beetles."

"I wish I could catch a boy doing it!"

"You may catch a woman at it any day. They do to men what boys do to insects. Cruelty to insects or animals? Abominable! Shocking! There is the society, there are fines, there is prison, to punish it! Cruelty to human beings? Bah! They have souls! What does it matter if they suffer? Suffering purifies the spirit for a better life!"

"Nonsense!"

"That is easily said. But it was on that principle that Philip burned the Jews, and they did not think it was nonsense. The beetles don't think it funny to be pulled to pieces, either. I don't. A large class of us don't, and yet you women have been doing it ever since Eve made a fool and a sinner of the only man who happened to be in the world just then. He was her husband, which was an excuse, but that's of no consequence to the argument."

"Perhaps not; but the argument, as

you call it, doesn't prove anything in particular, except that you are calling me names!" Margaret laughed again. "After all," she went on, "I do the best I can to be—what shall I say?—the contrary of disagreeable. You ask me to let you take me to my rehearsals, and I come day after day, risking something, because you are disguised. I don't risk much, perhaps—Mrs. Rushmore's disapproval. But that is something, for she has been very, very good to me, and I wouldn't lose her good opinion for a great deal. And you ask me to lunch with you, and I come—at least, I've been twice to your house, and I've lunched once. Really, if you are not satisfied, you're hard to please! We've hardly known each other a month."

"During which time I've never had but one idea. Don't raise your beautiful eyebrows as if you didn't understand!" He spoke very gently and smiled, though she could not see that.

"You've no idea how funny that is!" laughed Margaret.

"What?"

"If you could see yourself and hear yourself at the same time! With those goggles, and your leather cap and all the rest, you look like the frog footman in 'Alice'—or the dragon in 'Siegfried.' It does very well as long as you are disagreeable, but when you speak softly and throw intense expression into your voice"—she mimicked his tone—"it's really too funny, you know! It's just as if Fafner were to begin singing '*Una furtiva lagrima*' in a voice like Caruso's! *Siegfried* would go into convulsions of laughter, instead of slitting the dragon's throat."

"I wasn't trying to be picturesque just then," answered Logotheti, quite unmoved by the chaff. "I was only expressing my idea. I've known you about a month. The second time we met I asked you to marry me, and I've asked you several times since. As you can't attribute any interested motive to my determination——"

"Eh?"

"I said, to my determination——"

"Determination? How that sounds!"

"It sounds very like what I mean," answered Logotheti in an indifferent tone.

"But really, how can you 'determine' to marry me if I won't agree?"

"I'll make you," he replied with perfect calm.

"That sounds like a threat," said Margaret, her voice hardening a little, though she tried to speak lightly.

"A threat implies that the thing to be done to the person threatened is painful or at least disagreeable, doesn't it? I'm only a Greek, of course, and I don't pretend to know English well! I wish you would sometimes correct my mistakes. It would be so kind of you!"

"You know English quite as well as I do," Margaret answered. "Your definition is perfect."

"Oh! Then would it be painful or disagreeable to you to marry me?"

Margaret laughed, but hesitated a moment.

"It's always disagreeable to be made to do anything against one's will," she answered.

"I'm sorry," said Logotheti coolly, "but it can't be helped."

She was not quite sure how it would be best to meet this uncompromising statement, and she thought it wiser to laugh again, though she felt quite sure that at the moment there was that quick gleam in his eyes, behind the goggles, which had more than once frightened her a little. But he was looking at the road again, and a moment later he had put the car at full speed along a level stretch. That meant that the conversation was at an end for a little while. Then an accident happened.

A straight rush up an easy incline toward a turning ahead, and the deep note of the horn; round the corner to the right, close in; the flash of a bicycle coming down on the wrong side, and swerving desperately; a little brittle smashing of steel; then a man sprawling on his face in the road as the motor-car flew on.

Logotheti kept his eyes on the road, one hand went down to the levers, and the machine sprang forward at forty miles an hour.

"Stop!" cried Margaret. "Stop! You've killed him!"

Full speed. Fifty miles an hour now, on another level stretch beyond the turn. No sign of intelligence from Logotheti. Both hands on the wheel.

"Stop, I say!" Margaret's voice rang out clear and furious.

Logotheti's hands did not move. Margaret knew what to do. She had often been in motor-cars, and had driven a little herself. She was strong and perfectly fearless. Before Logotheti saw what she was going to do, she was beside him, she had thrown herself across him, and had got at the brake and levers. He was too much surprised to make any resistance; he probably would not have

tried to hinder her in any case, as he could not have done so without using his strength. The car was stopped in a few seconds; he had intuitively steered it until it stood still.

"How ridiculous!" he exclaimed. "As if one ever stopped for such a thing!"

Margaret's eyes flashed angrily, and her answer came short and sharp.

"Turn back at once," she said, and she sat down beside him on the front seat.

He obeyed, for he could do nothing else. In running away from the accident, he had simply done what most chauffeurs do under the circumstances. His experience told him that the man was not killed, though he had lain motionless in the road for a few moments. Logotheti had seen that the car had struck the hind wheel of the bicycle without touching the man's body. Moreover, the man had been on the wrong side of the road, and it was his fault that he had been run into. Logotheti had not meant to give him a chance to make out a case.

But now he turned back, obedient to Margaret's command. Before she had stopped the car it had run nearly a mile from the scene of the accident. When it reached the spot again, coming back at a more moderate pace, nearly five minutes had elapsed. She found the man leaning against the rail fence that followed the outer curve of the turning. It was the man they had so often met on the other road, in his square-toed kid boots and ill-fitting clothes; it was Edmund Lushington, with his soft student's hat off, and his face a good deal scratched by the smashing of his tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles. They had been tied behind with a black string, and the rims of them, broken in two, hung from his ears.

His nose was bleeding profusely, as he leaned against the fence, holding his head down. He was covered with mud, his clothes were torn, and he was as miserable, damaged, and undignified a piece of man as ever dreaded being taken at disadvantage by the idol of his affections. He would have made a pact with the powers of evil for a friendly wall or a clump of trees when he saw the car coming back. There was nothing but the fence.

The car stopped close beside him. He held his handkerchief to his nose, covering half his face as he looked up.

"Are you hurt, *monsieur*?" Margaret asked anxiously in French.

"On the contrary, *mademoiselle*," Lushington answered through the hand-



kerchief, and it sounded as if he had a bad cold in the head.

"I am afraid——" Margaret began, and then stopped suddenly, staring at him.

"You were on the wrong side of the road, *monsieur*," said Logotheti in an assertive tone.

"Perfectly," assented Lushington, holding his nose and turning half away.

"Then it was your fault," observed Logotheti.

"Precisely," admitted the other. "Pray don't stop. It's of no consequence!"

But he had betrayed himself unconsciously, in the most natural way. His spectacles were gone, and by covering the lower part of his face with his handkerchief he had entirely concealed the very great change made by shaving his beard and mustache. While he and Logotheti had been speaking, Margaret had scrutinized his features and had made sure of the truth. Then she believed that she would have recognized him by his voice alone. Between the emotion that followed the accident and the extreme anxiety his position caused him, the perspiration stood in beads on his forehead. Margaret smiled maliciously, for she remembered how often they had passed him on the road, and realized in an instant that he had disguised himself to watch her doings. He should pay for that.

"You look hot," she observed in English, fixing her eyes on him severely.

He blushed to the roots of his hair, though he had been rather pale. Logotheti, whose only preoccupation hitherto had been to get away as soon as possible, now stared at him, too. Margaret's tone, and her sudden change to the use of English, did the rest. He recognized Lushington, but remembered that he himself was completely disguised in his chauffeur's dress and mask; so he said nothing.

Lushington writhed under Margaret's eyes for a moment; but then his English courage and coolness suddenly returned, the color subsided from his face, and his expression hardened, as far as the necessary handkerchief permitted her to see it.

"Yes," he said, "I'm Lushington. I can only repeat that the accident happened by my fault. I'm used to taking the left side in England, and I lost my head. M. Logotheti need not have run away, for it would never have occurred to me to make a complaint."

He looked straight at Logotheti's goggles

as he spoke, and Margaret began to feel uncomfortable.

"I supposed that you had recognized me," observed the Greek coldly. "That is, no doubt, why you have taken the trouble to disguise yourself and watch me of late."

"That was the reason," answered Lushington, facing his adversary, but conscious that the necessity for holding his nose put him at a disadvantage as to his dignity.

"It was very well done," said the Greek with gravity. "I should never have known you."

"Your own disguise is admirable," answered the Englishman, with cool politeness. "If I had not seen you without your mask the other day I should not have recognized you."

"Shall we go on?" inquired Logotheti, turning to Margaret.

"No," she answered rather sharply. "Are you hurt?" she inquired, looking at Lushington again.

He was busy with his nose, which he had neglected for a few moments. He shook his head.

"I won't leave him here in this state," Margaret said to Logotheti.

The Greek made a gesture of indifference, but said nothing. Meanwhile Lushington got so far as to be able to speak again.

"Please go on," he said. "I can take care of myself, thank you. There are no bones broken."

Logotheti inwardly regretted that his adversary had not broken his neck, but he had tact enough to see that he must take Margaret's side or risk losing favor in her eyes.

"I really don't see how we can leave you here," he said to Lushington. "Your bicycle is smashed. I had not realized that. I'll put what's left of it into the car."

He jumped out as he spoke, and before Lushington could hinder him he had hold of the broken wheel. But Lushington followed quickly, and while he held his nose with his left hand, he grabbed the bicycle with the other. It looked as if the two were going to try which could pull harder.

"Let it alone, please," said Lushington, speaking with difficulty.

"No, no!" protested Logotheti politely, for he wished to please Margaret. "You must really let me put it in."

"Not at all!" retorted Lushington. "I'll walk it to Chaville."

"But I assure you you can't!" re-

torted the Greek. "Your hind wheel is broken to bits. It won't go round. You would have to carry it."

And he gently pulled with both hands.

"Then I'll throw the beastly thing away!" answered Lushington, who did not relinquish his hold. "It's of no consequence!"

"On the contrary," objected Logotheti, still pulling. "I know about those things. It can be made a very good bicycle again for next to nothing."

"All the better for the beggar who finds it!" cried the Englishman. "Throw it over the fence!"

"You English are so extravagant," said the Greek in a tone of polite reproach, but not relinquishing his hold.

"Possibly, but it's my own bicycle, and I prefer to throw it away."

Margaret had watched the contest in silence. She now stepped out of the car, came up to the two men and laid her hands on the object of contention. Logotheti let go instantly, but Lushington did not.

"This is ridiculous," said Margaret. "Give it to me!"

Lushington had no choice, and besides, he needed his right hand for his nose, which was getting the better of him again. He let go, and Margaret lifted the bicycle into the body of the car herself, though Logotheti tried to help her.

"Now, get in," she said to Lushington. "We'll take you as far as the Chaville station."

"Thank you," he answered. "I am quite able to walk."

He presented such a lamentable appearance that he would have hesitated to get into the car with Margaret even if they had been on good terms. He was in that state of mind in which a man wishes he might vanish into the earth like Korah and his company, or at least take to his heels without ceremony and run away. Logotheti had put up his glasses and shield, over the visor of his cap, and was watching his rival's discomfiture with a polite smile of pity. Lushington mentally compared him to Judas Iscariot.

"Let me point out," said the Greek, "that if you won't accept a seat with us, we, on our part, are much too anxious for your safety to leave you here in the road. You must have been badly shaken, besides being cut. If you insist upon walking, we'll keep beside you in the car. Then, if you faint, we can pick you up."

"Yes," assented Margaret with a touch of malice, "that is very sensible."

Lushington was almost choking.

"Do let me give you another handkerchief," said Logotheti sympathetically. "I always carry a supply when I'm motoring—they are so useful. Yours is quite spoilt."

A forcible expression rose to Lushington's lips, but he checked it. At the same time he wondered whether anybody he knew had ever been caught in such a detestable situation. But Anglo-Saxons generally perform their greatest feats of arms when they are driven into a corner or have launched themselves in some perfectly hopeless undertaking. It takes a Lucknow or a Balacava to show what they are really made of. Lushington was in a corner now; his temper rose and he turned upon his tormentors. At the same time, perhaps under the influence of his emotion, his nose stopped bleeding. It was scratched and purple from the fall, but he found another handkerchief of his own, and did what he could to improve his appearance. His shoulders and his jaw squared themselves as he began to speak, and his eyes were rather hard and bright.

"Look here," he said, facing Logotheti, "we don't owe each other anything, I think, so this sort of thing had better stop. You've been going about in disguise with Miss Donne, and I have been making myself look like some one else in order to watch you. We've found each other out, and I don't fancy that we're likely to be very friendly after this. So the best thing we can do is to part quietly and go in opposite directions. Don't you think so?"

The last question was addressed to Margaret. But instead of answering at once she looked down and pushed some little lumps of dry mud about with the toe of her shoe, as if she were trying to place them in a symmetrical figure. Lushington turned to Logotheti again and waited for an answer.

Now Logotheti did not care a straw for Lushington, and cared very little, on the whole, whether the latter watched him or not; but he was extremely anxious to please Margaret and play the part of generosity in her eyes.

"I'm very sorry if anything I've said has offended you," he said in a smooth tone, answering Lushington. "The fact is, it's all rather funny, isn't it? Yes, just so! I'm making the best apology I can for having been a little amused. I hope we part good friends, Mr. Lushington? That is, if you still insist on walking."

Margaret looked up while he was

speaking and nodded her approbation of the speech, which was very well conceived and left Lushington no loophole through which to spy offense. But he responded coldly to the advance.

"There is no reason whatever for apologizing," he said. "It's the instinct of humanity to laugh at a man who tumbles down in the street. The object of our artificial modern civilization is, however, to cloak that sort of instinct as far as possible. Good-morning."

After delivering this Parthian shot he turned away with the evident intention of going off on foot.

None of the three had noticed the sound of horses' feet and a light carriage approaching from the direction of Versailles. A phaeton came along at a smart pace and drew up beside the motor. Margaret uttered an exclamation of surprise, and the two men stared with something approaching to horror. It was Mrs. Rushmore, who had presumably taken a fancy for an airing as the day had turned out very fine. The coachman and groom had both seen Margaret and supposed that something had happened to the car.

Before the carriage had stopped Mrs. Rushmore had recognized Margaret, too, and was leaning out sideways, uttering loud exclamations of anxiety.

"My dear child!" she cried. "Good heavens! An accident! These dreadful automobiles! I knew it would happen!"

Portly though she was, she was standing beside Margaret in an instant, clasping her in a motherly embrace and panting for breath. It was evidently too late for Logotheti to draw his glasses and shield over his face, or for Lushington to escape. Each stood stock-still, wondering how long it would be before Mrs. Rushmore recognized him, and trying to think what she would say when she did. For one moment it seemed as if nothing were going to happen, for Mrs. Rushmore was too much preoccupied on Margaret's account to take the slightest notice of either of the others.

"Are you quite sure you're not hurt?" she inquired anxiously, while she scrutinized Margaret's blushing face. "Get into the carriage with me at once, my dear, and we'll drive home. You must go to bed at once! There's nothing so exhausting as a shock to the nerves! Camomile tea, my dear! Good old-fashioned camomile tea, you know! There's nothing like it! Clotilde makes it to perfection, and she shall rub you thoroughly! Get in, child! Get in!"

Quick to see the advantage of such a sudden escape, Margaret was actually getting into the carriage, when Mrs. Rushmore, who was kindness itself, remembered the two men and turned to Logotheti.

"I will leave you my groom to help," she said in her stiff French.

Then her eyes fell on Lushington's blood-stained face, and in the same instant it flashed upon her that the other man was Logotheti. Her jaw dropped in astonishment.

"Why—good gracious—how's this? Why—it's M. Logotheti himself! But you"—she turned to Lushington again—"you can't be Mr. Lushington—good Lord—yes, you are, and in those clothes, too. And—what have you done to your face?"

As her surprise increased she became speechless, while the two men bowed and smiled as pleasantly as they could under the circumstances.

"Yes, I'm Lushington," said the Englishman. "I used to wear a beard."

"My chauffeur was taken ill suddenly," said the Greek without a blush, "and as Miss Donne was anxious to get home I thought there would be no great harm if I drove the car out myself. I had hoped to find you in so that I might explain how it happened, for, of course, Miss Donne was a little—what shall I say?—a little——"

He hesitated, having hoped that Margaret would help him out. After waiting two or three seconds, Mrs. Rushmore turned on her.

"Margaret, what were you?" she asked with severity. "I insist upon knowing what you were."

"I'm sure I don't know," Margaret answered, trying to speak easily, as if it did not matter much. "It was very kind of M. Logotheti, at all events, and I'm much obliged to him."

"Oh, and pray, what has happened to Mr. Lushington?"

"I was on the wrong side of the road, and the car knocked me off my bicycle," added Lushington. "They kindly stopped to pick me up. They thought I was hurt."

"Well—you are," said Mrs. Rushmore. "Why don't you get into the automobile and let M. Logotheti take you home?"

As it was not easy to explain why he preferred walking in his battered condition, Lushington said nothing. Mrs. Rushmore turned to her groom, who was English.

"William," she said, "you must have a clothes-brush."

William had one concealed in some mysterious place under the box.

"Clean Mr. Lushington, William," said the good lady.

"Oh, thank you—no—thanks very much," protested Lushington.

But William, having been told to clean him, proceeded to do so, gently and systematically, beginning at his neck and proceeding thence with bold curving strokes of the brush, as if he were grooming a horse.

Instinctively Lushington turned slowly round on his heels, while he submitted to the operation, and the others looked on. They had ample time to note the singular cut of his clothes.

"He used to be always so well dressed!" said Mrs. Rushmore to Margaret in an audible whisper.

Lushington winced visibly, but as he was not supposed to hear the words he said nothing. William had worked down to the knees of his trousers, which he grasped firmly in one hand while he vigorously brushed the cloth with the other.

"That will do, thank you," said Lushington, trying to draw back one captive leg.

But William was inexorable, and there was no escape from his hold. He was an Englishman, and was therefore thorough; he was a servant, and he therefore thoroughly enjoyed the humor of seeing his betters in a pickle.

"And now, my dear," said Mrs. Rushmore to Margaret, "get in and I'll take you home. You can explain everything on the way. That's enough, William. Put away your brush."

Margaret had no choice, since fate had intervened.

"I'm very much obliged to you," she said, nodding to Logotheti; "and I hope you'll be none the worse," she added, smiling at Lushington.

Mrs. Rushmore bent her head with dignified disapproval, first to one and then to the other, and got into the carriage as if she were mounting the steps of a throne. She further manifested her displeasure at the whole affair by looking straight before her at the buttons on the back of the coachman's coat after she had taken her seat. Margaret got in lightly after her, and she scarcely glanced at Logotheti as the carriage turned; but her eyes lingered a little with an expression that was almost sad as she met Lushington's. She was conscious of a reaction of feeling; she was sorry that she had helped to make him suffer, that she had been amused by his

damaged condition and by his general discomfiture. He had made her respect him in spite of herself, just when she had thought that she could never respect him again; and suddenly the deep sympathy for him welled up, which she had taken for love, and which was as near to love as anything her heart had yet felt for a man.

She knew, too, that it was really her heart, and nothing else, where he was concerned. She was human, she was young, she was more alive than ordinary women, as great singers generally are, and Logotheti's ruthless masculine vitality stirred her and drew her to him in a way she did not quite like. His presence disturbed her oddly, and she was a little ashamed of liking the sensation, for she knew quite well that such feelings had nothing to do with what she called her real self. She might have hated him and even despised him, but could never have been indifferent when he was close to her. Sometimes the mere touch of his hand at meeting or parting thrilled her and made her feel as if she were going to blush. But she was never really in sympathy with him as she was with Lushington.

"And now, Margaret," said Mrs. Rushmore after a silence that had lasted a full minute, "I insist on knowing what all this means."

Margaret inwardly admitted that Mrs. Rushmore had some right to insist, but she was a little doubtful herself about the meaning of what had happened. If it meant anything, it meant that she had been flirting rather rashly and had got into a scrape. She wondered what the two men were saying now that they were alone together, and she turned her head to look over the back of the phaeton, but a turn of the road already hid the motor-car from view.

Meanwhile Mrs. Rushmore's face showed that she still insisted, and Margaret had to say something. As she was a truthful person it was not easy to decide what to say, and while she was hesitating Mrs. Rushmore expressed herself again.

"Margaret," said she, "I'm surprised at you. It makes no difference what you say. I'm surprised."

The words were spoken with a slow and melancholy intonation that might have indicated anything but astonishment.

"Yes," Margaret remarked rather desperately, "I don't wonder. I suppose I've been flirting outrageously with them both. But I really could not foresee that one would run over the other and



that you would appear just at that moment, could I? I'm helpless. I've nothing to say. You must have flirted when you were young. Try to remember what it was like, and make allowance for human weakness!"

She laughed nervously and glanced nervously at her companion, but Mrs. Rushmore's face was like iron.

"Mr. Rushmore," said the latter, alluding to her departed husband, "would not have understood such conduct."

Margaret thought this was very probable, judging from the likenesses of the late Ransom Rushmore which she had seen. There was one in particular, an engraving of him when he had been president of some big company, which had always filled her with a vague uneasiness. In her thoughts she called him the "commercial missionary," and was glad for his sake and her own that he was safe in heaven.

"I'm sorry," she said, without much contrition. "I mean," she went on, correcting herself, and with more feeling, "I'm sorry I've done anything that you don't like, for you've been ever so good to me."

"So have other people," answered the elder woman with an air of mystery and reproof.

"Oh, yes, I know! Everybody has been very kind—especially Mme. Bonanni."

"Should you be surprised to hear that the individual who bought out Mr. Moon and made you independent, did it from purely personal motives?"

Margaret turned to her quickly in great surprise.

"What do you mean? I thought it was a company. You said so."

"In business, one man can be a company, if he owns all the stock," said Mrs. Rushmore sententiously.

"I don't understand those things," Margaret answered, impatient to know the truth. "Who was it?"

"I hardly think I ought to tell you, my dear. I promised not to. But I will allow you to guess. That's quite different from telling, and I think you ought to know, because you are under great obligations to him."

"You don't mean to say—" Margaret stopped, and the blood rose slowly in her face.

"You may ask me if it was one of those two gentlemen we have just left in the road," said Mrs. Rushmore. "But mind, I'm not telling you!"

"M. Logotheti!" Margaret leaned back and bit her lip.

"You've made the discovery yourself, Margaret. Remember that I've told you nothing. I promised not to, but I thought you ought to know."

"It's an outrage!" cried Margaret, breaking out. "How did you dare to take money from him for me?"

Mrs. Rushmore seemed really surprised now, though she did not say she was.

"My dear!" she exclaimed, "you would not have had me refuse, would you? Money is money, you know."

The good lady's inherited respect for the stuff was discernible in her tone.

"Money!" Margaret repeated the word with profound contempt and a good deal of anger.

"Yes, my dear," retorted Mrs. Rushmore severely. "Yes, money. It is because your father and mother spoke of it in that silly, contemptuous way that they died so poor. And now that you've got it, take my advice and don't turn up your nose at it."

"Do you suppose I'll keep it, now that I know where it comes from? I'll give it back to him to-day!"

"No, you won't," answered Mrs. Rushmore, with the conviction of certainty.

"I tell you I will!" Margaret cried. "I could not sleep to-night if I knew that I had money in my possession that was given me—given me like a gift—by a man who wants to marry me! Ugh! It's disgusting!"

"Margaret, this is ridiculous. M. Logotheti came to see me and explained the whole matter. He said that he had made a very good bargain and expected to realize a large sum by the transaction. Do you suppose that such a good man of business would think of making any one a present of a hundred thousand pounds? You must be mad! A hundred thousand pounds is a great deal of money, Margaret. Remember that."

"So much the better for him! I shall give it back to him at once!"

Mrs. Rushmore smiled.

"You can't," she said. "You've never even asked me where it is, and while you are out of your mind I shall certainly not tell you. You seem to forget that when I undertook to bring suit against Alvah Moon you gave me a general power of attorney to manage your affairs. I shall do whatever is best for you."

"I don't understand business," Margaret answered, "but I'm sure you have no power to force M. Logotheti's money upon me. I won't take it."

"You have taken it and I have given a receipt for it, my dear, so it's of no

use to talk nonsense. The best thing you can do is to give up this silly idea of going on the stage, and just live like a lady on your income."

"And marry my benefactor, I suppose!" Margaret's eyes flashed. "That's what he wants—what you all want—to keep me from singing! He thought that if he made me independent I would give it up, and you encouraged him! I see it now. As for the money itself, until I really have it in my hands it's not mine; but just as soon as it is I'll give it back to him, and I'll tell him so to-day."

The carriage rolled through the pretty woods of Fausses Reposes, and the sweet spring breeze fanned Margaret's cheeks in the shade. But she felt fever in her blood, and her heart beat fast and angrily, as if it were a conscious creature imprisoned in a cage. She was angry with herself and with every one else, with Logotheti, with Mrs. Rushmore, with poor Lushington for making such a fool of himself just when she was prepared to like him better than ever. She was sure that she had good cause to hate every one, and she hated accordingly, with a good will. She wished that she might never spend another hour under Mrs. Rushmore's roof, that she might never see Logotheti again, that she were launched in her artistic career, free at last and responsible to no one for her actions, her words or her thoughts.

But Mrs. Rushmore began to think that she had made a mistake in letting her know too soon who had bought out Alvah Moon, and she wondered vaguely why she had betrayed the secret, trying to account for her action on the ground of some reasonably thought-out argument, which was quite impossible, of course. So they both maintained a rather hostile silence during the rest of the homeward drive.

## XVII.

UNTIL the carriage was out of sight, Logotheti and Lushington stood still where Margaret had left them. Then Lushington looked at his adversary coolly for about four seconds, stuck his hands into his pockets, turned his back, and deliberately walked off without a word. Logotheti was so little prepared for such an abrupt closure that he stood looking after the Englishman in surprise till the latter had made a dozen steps.

"I say!" said the Greek, calling after him then and affecting an exceedingly English tone. "I say, you know, this won't do."

Lushington stopped, turned on his heel and faced him from a distance.

"What won't do?" he asked coolly.

Seeing that he came no nearer, Logotheti went forward a little.

"You admitted just now that you had been playing the spy," said the Greek, whose temper was getting beyond his control, now that the women were gone.

"Yes," said Lushington, "I've been watching you."

"I said spying," answered Logotheti; "I used the word 'spy.' Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"You don't seem to. I'm insulting you. I mean to insult you."

"Oh!" A faint smile crossed the Englishman's face. "You want me to send you a couple of friends and fight a duel with you? I won't do anything so silly. As I told you before Miss Donne, we don't owe each other anything to speak of, so we may as well part without calling each other bad names."

"If that is your view of it, you had better keep out of my way in future."

Logotheti laid his hand on the car to get in as he spoke. Lushington's face hardened.

"I shall not take any pains to do that," he answered. "On the contrary, if you go on doing what you have been doing of late, you'll find me very much in your way."

Logotheti turned upon him savagely.

"Do you want to marry Miss Donne yourself?" he asked.

Lushington, who was perfectly cool now that no woman was present, was struck by the words, which contained a fair question, though the tone was angry and aggressive.

"No," he answered quietly. "Do you?"

Logotheti stared at him.

"What the devil did you dare to think that I meant?" he asked. "It would give me the greatest satisfaction to break your bones for asking that!"

Lushington came a step nearer, his hands in his pockets, though his eyes were rather bright.

"You may try if you like," he said.

"But I've something more to say, and I don't think we need fall to fisticuffs on the highroad like a couple of bargees. I've misunderstood you. If you are going to marry Miss Donne, I shall keep out of your way altogether. I made a mistake, because you haven't the reputation of a saint, and when a man of your fortune runs after a young singer it's not usually

with the idea of marrying her. I'm glad I was wrong."

Logotheti was too good a judge of men to fancy that Lushington was in the least afraid of him, or that he spoke from any motive but a fair and firm conviction; and the Greek himself, with many faults, was too brave not to be generous. He turned again to get into the car.

"I believe you English take it for granted that every foreigner is a born scoundrel," he said with something like a laugh.

"To tell the truth," Lushington answered, "I believe we do. But we are willing to admit that we can be mistaken. Good-morning!"

He walked away, and this time Logotheti did not stop him, but got in and started the car in the opposite direction without looking back. He was conscious of wishing to kill the cool Englishman, and though his expression betrayed nothing but annoyance, a little color rose and settled on his cheek-bones; and that bodes no good in the faces of dark men when they are naturally pale.

He reached home, and it was there still; he changed his clothes, and yet it was not gone; he drank a cup of coffee and smoked a big cigar; and the faint red spots were still there, though he seemed absorbed in the book he was reading.

It was not his short interview with Lushington which had so much moved him, though it had been the first disturbing cause. In men whose nature, physical and moral, harks back to the savage ancestor, to the pirate of northern or southern seas, to the Bedouin of the desert, to the Tartar of Bokhara or the Suliote of Albania, the least bit of a quarrel stirs up all the blood at once, and the mere thought of a fight rouses every masculine passion. The silent Scotchman, the stately Arab, the courtly Turk, are far nearer to the fanatic than the quick-tempered Frenchman or the fiery Italian.

For a long time Constantine Logotheti had been playing at civilized living, and especially at the more or less gentle diversion of civilized love-making; but he was suddenly tired of it all, because it had never been quite natural to him, and he grew bodily hungry and thirsty for what he wanted. The round flushed spots on his cheeks were the outward signs of something very like a fever which had seized him within the last two hours. Until then he would hardly have believed that his magnificent artificial calm could

break down, and that he could wish to get his hands on another man's throat, or take by force the woman he loved and drag her away to his own lawless East.

He wondered now why he had not fallen upon Lushington and tried to kill him in the road. He wondered why, when Margaret had been safe in the motor-car, he had not put the machine at full speed for Havre, where his yacht was lying. His artificial civilization had hindered him, of course! It would not check him now, if Lushington were within arm's length, or if Margaret were in his power. It would be very bad for any one to come between him and what he wanted so much, just then, that his throat was dry and he could hear his heart beating as he sat in his chair.

He sat there a long time because he was not sure what he might do if he allowed himself the liberty of crossing the room. If he did that, he might write a note, or go to the telephone, or ring for his secretary, or do one of fifty little things whereby the train of the inevitable may be started in the doubtful moments of life.

It did not occur to him that he was not the arbiter of his actions in that moment, free to choose between good and evil, which he, perhaps, called by other names just then. He probably could not have remembered a moment in his whole life at which he had not believed himself the master of his own future, with full power to do this, or that, or to leave it undone. And now he was quite sure that he was choosing the part of wisdom in resisting the strong temptation to do something rash which made it a physical effort to sit still and keep his eyes on his book. He held the volume firmly with both hands, as if he were clinging to something fixed, which secured him from being made to move against his will.

One of fate's most amusing tricks is to let us work with might and main to help her on, while she makes us believe that we are straining every nerve and muscle to force her back.

If Logotheti had not insisted on sitting still that afternoon nothing might have happened. If he had gone out, or if he had shut himself up with his statue, beyond the reach of visitors, his destiny might have been changed, and one of the most important events of his life might never have come to pass.

But he sat still with his book, firm as a rock, sure of himself, convinced that he was doing the best thing, proud of his strength of mind and his obstinacy, per-

fectly pharisaical in his contempt of human weakness, persuaded that no power in earth or heaven could force him to do or say anything against his mature judgment. He sat in his deep chair near a window that was half open, his legs stretched straight out before him, his flashing patent leather feet crossed in a manner which showed off the most fantastically over-embroidered silk socks, tightly drawn over his lean but solid ankles.

From the wall behind him the strange face in the encaustic painting watched him with drooping lids and dewy lips that seemed to quiver; the ancient woman, ever young, looked as if she knew that he was thinking of her, and that he would not turn round to see her because she was so like Margaret Donne.

His back was to the picture, but his face was to the door. It opened softly, he looked up from his book, and Margaret was before him, coming quickly forward. For an instant he did not move, for he was taken unawares. Behind her, by the door, a manservant gesticulated apologies—the lady had pushed by him before he had been able to announce her. Then another figure appeared, hurrying after Margaret; it was little Mme. de Rosa, out of breath.

Logotheti got up now; and when he was on his feet, Margaret was already close to him. She was pale, and her eyes were bright, and when she spoke he felt the warmth of her breath in his face. He held out his hand mechanically, but he hardly noticed that she did not take it.

"I want to speak to you alone," she said.

Mme. de Rosa evidently understood that nothing more was expected of her for the present, and she sat down and made herself comfortable.

"Will you come with me?" Logotheti asked, controlling his voice.

Margaret nodded; he led the way and they left the room together. Just outside the door there was a small lift. He turned up the electric light, and Margaret stepped in; then he followed and worked the lift himself. In the narrow space there was barely room for two; Logotheti felt a throbbing in his temples, and the red spots on his cheek-bones grew darker. He could hear and almost feel Margaret's slightest movement as she stood close behind him while he faced the shut door of the machine.

He did not know why she had come; he did not guess why she wished to be alone

with him; but that was what she had asked, and he was taking her where they would really be alone together. It was not his fault. Why has she come?

When a terrible accident happens to a man, the memory of all his life may pass before his eyes in the interval of a second or two. I once knew a man who fell from the flying trapeze in a circus in Berlin, struck on one of the ropes to which the safety net was laced, and broke most of his bones. He told me that he had never before understood the meaning of eternity; but that ever afterward, for him, it meant the time that had passed after he had missed his hold and before he struck and was unconscious. He could associate nothing else with the word. Logotheti remembered, as long as he lived, the interminable interval between Margaret's request to see him alone and the noiseless closing of the sound-proof door when they had entered the upper room, where Aphrodite stood in the midst and the soft light fell from shaded windows.

Even then, though her anger was hot and her thoughts were chasing one another furiously, Margaret could not repress an exclamation of surprise when she first saw the statue facing her in its bare beauty, like a living thing.

Logotheti laid one hand very lightly upon her arm, and was going to say something, but she sprang back from his touch as if it burnt her. The color deepened in his dark cheeks, and his eyes seemed brighter and nearer together. When a woman comes to a man's house and asks to be alone with him, she need not play horror because the tips of his fingers rest on her sleeve for a moment. Why had she come?

Margaret spoke first.

"How did you dare to settle money on me?" she asked, standing back from him.

Logotheti understood for the first time that she was angry with him, and that her anger had brought her to his house. The fact did not impress him much, though he wished she were in a better temper. The sound of her voice was sweet to him, whatever she said.

"Oh?" he ejaculated with a sort of thoughtful interrogation. "Has she told you? She agreed to say nothing about it. How very annoying!"

His sudden calm was exasperating, for Margaret did not know him well enough to see that below the surface his blood was boiling.

*(To be continued.)*



# THE STAGE

## THE CUSTOM-MADE PLAY.

The crying need of the English-speaking stage to-day is plays and audiences. We have actors and theaters to burn. Why is it that going to the play is a bore to most New York men? Is it not because they sense the fact that they are being catered to as if they were so many children eager for painted toys? Everything is artificial, made to order, from the plays that are written to match

a star's hair or his nasal twang to the actors that are turned out of training-schools in droves.

Take "De Lancey," Augustus Thomas' new comedy for John Drew. It is far and away behind other Thomas plays, simply because it was written along a yardstick laid up and down Mr. Drew's personality. The result is that nothing except Mr. Drew seems real. The rest of the cast are mere puppets dangling from strings that vibrate to the move-



CHRISTIE MACDONALD, PRIMA DONNA IN THE NEW COMIC OPERA, "TWO-NINE-O-FIVE,"  
BY JOHN KENDRICK BANGS AND MANUEL KLEIN.

*From her latest photograph by Hall, New York.*