

BUCKINGHAM GATE

October.—He commenced the usual scene this afternoon.

"If I could only believe, when I come into the room, that it is love you are thinking of. But you never give yourself up, you are always self-conscious. You never lose sight of yourself for a moment."

The expression on his face was familiar.

"No, not when there are two such lovely Venetian mirrors in the room," I answered mildly. "I couldn't resist letting you take the flat when I saw them. Venetian glass is my passion, you know—it simply compels me, draws me almost like a spell." I pulled myself away and wandered over to the mantel, where I could

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move the tips of my fingers up and down on the bowls and flagons.

"So that was it, was it? You were not thinking of me, you were not thinking of being able to be with me here, of the pleasure of seeing me here—you were thinking only of the Venetian glass." He expanded with rage.

"Not only of the glass, Oscar," I corrected gently; "the curtains are very beautiful." I was just going on in a most interesting way to enlarge on the beautiful colour of the curtains when he became angry and left, and so I was able after all to get to the Zarathustra at Queen's Hall. I was so afraid I would be late for it.

My mind and I are just sitting tentatively on these green chairs for a few weeks so that we can decide what we really want to do.

At least I have time now for the con-

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certs, the picture galleries, am able to read again.

The incident of being an editor almost eclipsed the fact of my being a woman. We are not built to go out in all weathers and sit in a stiff chair from ten to five.

As a matter of fact, the House—if it hadn't been for the careless weakness of a corrosive drug—did me far less harm physically than conducting the literary policy of a magazine; than those iron-bound months of getting money by my brains.

I look at it quite impartially, because, strictly speaking, I am really an extremely well-educated woman and quite clever—quite above the average woman in intelligence.

And how very much more interesting it was! how many more interesting people I met! Fast women are necessarily only with rich men, and very often with the

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cleverest men the world has: a man under those circumstances gives the very best of his mind—for he would loathe to be refused—and with me they knew what was the price. The nights when we have talked the dawn in and it has found the man still huddled, wan, and stripping his soul. I can get again the faint dead smell of the flowers drooping in the ashy smoke and the clink of new life as the bowls of ice came in and the hiss of the wine bubbled up again in the glass. And then we would close out the day, the grey ghost trees, the keen smell of the reddening sky.

Tuesday.—I sometimes wonder as I look at it all if there is anything in it for me. I don't want to be welded into anybody's life like an expensive painting. I don't want to add to the decoration of other people's days. My life is for myself.

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Every minute I live wants to be for some tangible benefit to myself.

And Oscar torments me so by his absurd assumption of outworn ideas, that one-third of my time is spent in yielding to him, and two-thirds in furious mental protests against the false situation. If he would only recognise that he is merely useful, that he is an experience, that I've got to have some money from somewhere, now that I have left that devastating *Salon*. But he assumes that I am dedicating my life to him and that my fount of life is my bank account. So it is, but not exactly in the way he means.

Oh, for money of my own!

What a happy woman Cleopatra was! A few gorgeously built male slaves, and then kill them off in the morning. *Off with his head!* O du lieber Himmel! it's all very well to laugh, but men are such horrors if you are dependent on them.

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Saturday.—I am corroded by his mood. I am, after all, human—based on the beast, and he appeals to me in the fiercest strength of life. He owns me, and exults in all that our humanity makes possible.

Not that I care, that I think there is anything better; but I want the other too, and he is blinding me to music, he comes between me and the pleasure of colour, he makes himself the sum of life to me, he makes me as mad as himself.

But I know myself. If I am drowned in it, he must be drowned in it too—and I loathe being serious.

How tired I am of all this plunging up and down in the scale of things! With other men I am looking on, they never seemed to get into the world where I live, they were only the varnish on the idea of Italy, the frame of Stockholm, a nail on which to hang the music of Berlin.

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Tools, stepping-stones, the opportunity to escape, escape from the clamp of circumstance that rusts into your body if it is not broken by emotion.

Ah, if I could only lie back and take life with open arms!

December.—I sit and look at the Venetian mirrors, the Venetian sconces, the Venetian vases: they are tranquil, cold, lovely.

I have only mignonette in them and white narcissus. Colour is getting now to weigh on my nerves like a blow.

His face was distorted when he pressed me down on the floor between his knees. "Say you will be faithful to me, promise you will be faithful to me." Faithful to him—and he has his wife!

Oh, but he dismembers each day when he comes, each minute, each week, with his violence! He rips my mind in pieces,

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he hurts my flesh. I wait quivering in the midst of it all for the storm of kisses that beat me down into silence, that conquer me like blows, that make me a whipped slave to do what he likes with.

Yet he is the only man who can kiss me into that strange unconsciousness, that death of will that makes you a thing merely of flesh. I read once of how boa-constrictors get their food ready to eat.

I shudder when he drags me to him, when he pushes my throat back, yet I wait for that sudden oblivion that will leave me helpless.

He is vampiring my senses, he is dragging me nearer and nearer each time to some flood that will smother us both. Oscar, let me go!

MONTE CARLO

I

January.—It knew I would come back, my exquisite, make-believe world, the place of unreality and nerves, the sun, and of the altar of Chance.

I am quite care-free; no one expects me to be anything but myself. I stand aside, I watch life, I am deliciously alone. I can hardly repress myself from spreading out my hands in visible ecstasy when I first go out in the extreme morning air and meet the golden waves of the sun, the spring coolness of the earth's smell, the pressure of the flowers' perfume, the dazzling horizon of the diamond-faceted sea. At night when I leave the Casino the convex sky, hung in constellations of jewels,

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dips through the lines of the palm fronds, and the darkness is Nature living, sheltered in the shadowed petals of unseen roses.

Everything is shut away by the click of the little sibilant balls as they whirl to the touch of Fate, and life rises and falls to the drip of the cards as they fall endlessly, making the scale of Fate sway up and down.

The Riviera Palace Hotel.—This seemed still further away, still more removed. I have a terror of masses of people, of being near my kind. This mountain ledge paved with flowers, where I step from my white bedroom to the Terrace set austere with its hyacinths and cactus, is held far above the burning blue of the sea, the little gilt-crowned world that lies on the shore.

As I take tea in the corridor in the late