



THE  
MASTER-KNOT  
OF  
HUMAN FATE

ELLIS · MEREDITH







The Master-Knot of Human  
Fate



# The Master-Knot of Human Fate

By

Ellis Meredith

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate  
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,  
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road ;  
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

OMAR KHAYYÁM

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I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,  
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\* \* \* \* \*

Ah Love ! could you and I with Him conspire  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,  
Would not we shatter it to bits — and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire !

OMAR KHAYYÁM



## I

*To-night God knows what things shall tide,  
The Earth is racked and faint—  
Expectant, sleepless, open-eyed;  
And we, who from the Earth were made,  
Thrill with our Mother's pain.*

KIPLING.



# The Master-Knot of Human Fate



**A**LONG one of the most precipitous of the many Rocky Mountain trails a man and a woman climbed slowly one spring morning. The air was cold, and farther up the mountains little patches of snow lay here and there in the hollows. Two or three miles below them nestled one of the most famous pleasure resorts of the entire region. Three or four times as distant lay the nearest town of any importance. Over the plain and through the clear atmosphere it looked like a bird's-eye-view map rather than an actual town. Far away to the left, gorgeous in coloring

## 4           The Master-Knot

and grotesque in outline, could be seen the odd figures of many strangely piled rocks.

The two pedestrians stopped now and then to rest and look away over the matchless scene and take in its wonderful beauty. The woman was tall and slender, with a superb carriage. Even on that steep ascent she moved with the grace and freedom of one who has entire command of her body. She was well gowned also for such an excursion. Her short, green cloth skirt did not impede her movements, and high, stout shoes gave her firm footing. She had removed her jacket, and in her bright pink silk blouse and abbreviated petticoat, with the glow of the morning on her usually pale face, she looked almost girlish; but her face was not that of girlhood. It was without lines, and the heavy masses of

## The Master-Knot 5

her golden-brown hair were quite unstreaked with silver; but her white forehead was serene with the calmness that follows overcoming, and her dark gray eyes saw the world shorn of its illusions. In her there were, or had been, unrealized capacities for life in all its height and depth and breadth. In studying her one became vaguely aware that, having missed these things, she had found a fourth dimension which supplied the loss.

Her companion was younger by several years, and so much taller that she seemed almost small in comparison. In his eyes there danced and shone the light of truth and courage and hope, and he walked with the buoyancy of joy and youth. Israfil, Antinous, Apollo,—he might have stood as the model for any of them, or for a fit representation of the words of

## 6           The Master-Knot

the wise man, "Rejoice, oh, young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart."

The relation between the two was problematic. Certainly there was no question of love on either side. Equally certainly there existed between them a rare and exquisite camaraderie, a perfect comprehension that often made words superfluous. A look sufficed.

They toiled up the steep, narrow path until they reached a wide trail, a carriage road that had been laid out and abandoned. It swept around the mountain-side, miles above the little city on the plain, and terminated suddenly at an immense gateway of stone. Here the mountain had been torn asunder, and two palisades of gray-green rock rose grim and terrible for



hundreds of feet, while between them, dashing over boulders and trees and the impedimenta of ages, a little stream rushed along in the eternal night at their base. Far away to the west, range upon range piled themselves against the intense blue sky. Beyond a rustic gate, standing across the path that narrowed to a few feet before the wall of stone, a park, sparkling and green in the sunlight, was visible. They stopped and regarded the two gateways, — one the work of nature, the other the feeble counterfeit of man, — and then swinging open the creaking wooden affair, passed into the peaceful valley. A few yards away stood a small log cabin, but the chimney was smokeless, and though the chickens clucked in the yard, and a collie lay on the doorstep, it seemed desolate and deserted.

## 8           The Master-Knot

Passing along an almost invisible trail, they found themselves in the wildest and most remote part of that wild and remote region. They saw a few stray animals, but no human beings. This was one of the few places where mining was not a universal pursuit, and it was too early to do much in the few mines that did exist. There are entire sections in the Rockies that are deserted for more than half the year, and this was one of them. That day there was no one at the signal station. The keeper had gone down to the valley for fresh stores, and to learn something of the terrific disturbances that were said to be threatening the entire Eastern coast with annihilation. Perhaps the owners of the log cabin had made a similar pilgrimage.

The scene was flooded with moonlight when the travellers passed the

gate on their homeward way, and sat down on a boulder a few yards without the frowning portal. The night was cold, and the woman had put on her jacket, and sunk her numbed fingers in its pockets. In spite of her weariness she was troubled and restless, and turning looked first at the beetling crags back of them, then away over the plain at the twinkling lights of the town below. They heard indistinctly the sounds of bells ringing wildly, and overhead flocks of birds circled and called with shrill, uncanny voices. Yet the moonlight was so bright that they saw each other as plainly as if it were day, and its placid radiance seemed strangely at variance with the disturbed wild-fowl, and certain weird and fitful sounds that seemed to be sighed forth from the bosom of the earth.

10      The Master-Knot

“It is a pity,” she said, “that we cannot pass through this gateway into paradise without descending to earth again.”

“I don’t believe you are half as tired of life as you say,” he answered with an impatient movement of his head. “You may not shrink from death as I do, or enjoy life so keenly, but isn’t it a good thing to be alive to-night? Isn’t it fine to be a mile or so above the rest of humanity and the deadly conventionalities? Aren’t you glad you came?”

She did not answer, but presently said dreamily, “Suppose that plain was the sea.”

“It isn’t hard to suppose,” he answered. “I have seen the Pacific when it looked just so.”

“Oh, no,” she said quickly. “Nothing is like the sea but itself. You will

## The Master-Knot 11

never persuade me that I love the mountains so well. And the plains, — just imagine if all that gray green silver were gray blue, with here and there a gathering crest of foam, racing to break in spray about these mountains — ”

“ Why, look, ” he said, drawing her a little to one side, “ there is your liquid blue, with its white crest moving toward us. Could the real sea look more wonderful than that? It is blotting out everything. Now it recedes, — was it not real? ”

She started to her feet. “ This is a very strange night, ” she said irrelevantly, in a rather strained voice. “ Listen, — and see how many birds are flying about us; I never saw them fly so at night. What does it mean? ”

They stood together, looking at each other with startled faces. The

## 12      The Master-Knot

whole mountain, all the mountains, seemed to be alive and trembling under them. Overhead thousands of birds wheeled and screamed with terror in their mingled outcries. The little creeping things scuttled away up the mountain. The silver-blue wave widened and spread over the plain from north to south, and the air was full of a dull, terrible roar, as if the fountains of the great deep had broken up, and a thousand white-crested waves rushed toward the hapless city before them. They covered it, and with a wild jangle of bells, faintly audible over the tumult, it sank out of sight, all the gleaming, dancing lights disappearing in an instant. The white crests came on and broke about the mountains, and receded and came on again with a deafening roar. Then the crust of the earth between the

mountain range and the spot where the city had been, seemed to crack like a bit of dried orange peel, and the flood rushed over the abyss, and there arose a blinding steam that hid the whole scene below, and ascending circled the mountain peaks in mist.

All about them on the mountain-side rose the cries of terrified wild things, and along the narrow pathway into the park a herd of cattle and horses rushed and disappeared among the aspens that trembled as never before. The collie, scenting their presence, came and crouched whining at their feet, and a bird fell exhausted into the woman's arms. She closed her hands over it, unconsciously giving it the protection none could give them, and in the fog moved toward the figure of her companion.

## 14      The Master-Knot

His arm closed about her convulsively.

“ Shall we go farther up the mountain ? ” he asked.

“ ‘ If it be now, ’t is not to come ; if it be not to come, it will be now, ’ ” she answered, insensibly finding it easier to use another’s words than to coin phrases while holding death-watch over a continent.

They sat down on the boulder. After what seemed like countless hours, she said, “ I wonder how long we have been here. Perhaps it is years.”

He looked at his watch. “ I do not know whether we are in time or eternity,” he answered simply. “ It is nearly four o’clock by this watch.”

Through the dense vapor they saw the sun rise, red and sullen, but the mist was so impenetrable that they dared not move about. The day and



night passed, almost without their knowledge, and the second morning found them, as the first, by the great boulder. The wind rose with the sun, and when it blew aside the veil of mist, far as the eye could reach, there rolled a sea, white-capped, turbulent, fretful, as if unwilling to leave a single peak to tower above its lordly dominion.

The man and woman followed the collie to the cabin, and there found some food, then they retraced their way until they could look down over the valley where the town had slept. Nothing was left. There was not even a prospector's cabin. The shock which had succeeded the first wild dash had been volcanic. The very cañons looked strange, and though they called again and again there came no answer.

## 16      The Master-Knot

“Come,” the man said imperiously. “Let us go to the Peak. There must be some one there.”

They reached the signal station late in the afternoon; no one was there. Looking down from that awful eminence, they saw on the other side of the range the same desolation, the same watery waste. They seemed to be on an island, alone on a wide, wide sea. Nowhere curled a friendly wreath of smoke; nowhere was there sound of any human thing.

They went wearily back. There was nowhere else to go. If the gateway had been awful in its solitude, the Peak was still more desolate. There was nothing living there, except themselves and the dog that followed closely at their heels, making no excursions of its own. The hour was wearing toward midnight when they sank down

## The Master-Knot 17

by the boulder once more to watch the darkness disappear, and wait for they knew not what. The man built a huge fire, so that if any other waifs had been left by this wreck of a world they might see the beacon, and reply in some fashion. They did not talk, except now and then, in a half whisper, they gave monosyllabic queries and replies. The shock that had obliterated a continent seemed to deprive them of all active use of their senses. They moved only in circles, returning always to the place from which they had watched the cataclysm.

It was almost sundown when, with a superhuman effort, they again entered the sunny, beautiful park. The air was balmy, and there all remained quite as before. In front of the cabin stood an Alderney; as they approached her, she lowed uneasily. The woman

## 18      The Master-Knot

looked up, and then spoke aloud with the quick sympathy that had always been her greatest attraction. She seemed to understand so readily, whether it was a man's head, a woman's heart, or an animal's wants.

“She needs to be milked,” she said, and pushing open the door she entered the cabin. There were two rooms, the farther of which was evidently a bedroom. There was a large fireplace at one end of the main room. At one side of it was a primitive dresser, with such utensils and china as the place afforded; on the other were some miner's implements and a shovel. There was a small table and beside it were placed two chairs. There was a rocker by the one window, and a pot of geraniums on the sill; forming a kind of window seat was a long seaman's chest. At the other end of the

room there was a desk covered with green oilcloth, and above it was a shelf containing some books and a clock.

The woman took off her hat and jacket and brushed back her hair, then turning back her sleeves went outdoors again. Under the rude porch on a slab table stood a number of buckets, and there was a stool by the door. She took a bucket and the stool and walked away a few paces, the Alderney following. As she began milking she looked over her shoulder at the man watching her and said, "Won't you build a fire?"

He gathered some wood and went into the cabin. She threw out the first pint or so of milk, then finished milking and strained the foaming contents of her pail into some crocks left sunning by the door, and went into the house. She found some corn-

## 20      The Master-Knot

meal and salt, and deftly mixed the dough, and arranging the shovel in the hot ashes, set her hoe-cake to bake. In the mean time the man had brought water from the brook, and as the woman swung the crane over the blaze, he filled the iron kettle hanging therefrom. There was some sour milk, and by a mysterious process she converted it into Dutch cheese. There was some butter and a few eggs, and she found a white cloth and spread the table with the few poor dishes, placing the geranium in the centre. As the water steamed and boiled, she caught up a tin canister.

“See,” she said with forced gayety; “let us eat, drink, and be merry, for there is just enough tea in the world for two people to drink once!”

She made the beverage and poured it into the thick cups, and breaking

the yellow pone and piling it on a platter, they sat down to the strangest meal they had ever known.

The man watched her with fascinated eyes. He had never before seen her do anything for herself, yet she presided over the simple meal she had prepared as graciously as over the course dinners of her chef. How should she know how to make hoe-cake?

All through the singular feast the sparkle and play of her fancy kept them in hysterical laughter. Afterwards, as she cleared away, the same wild mood possessed her. The man wondered if her mind was going with all else; but as she hung up the towel, her humor changed, and she ran out of the cabin into the dusk as if she could not bear the simple, homely tasks in a homeless world, the firelight and the bounds of

## 22      The Master-Knot

a dwelling when doom must be at hand. The man put a fresh log on the fire, and covered the coals with ashes. He would have preferred to remain there, but he knew why she was hurrying back to the mountain-side, and he took her coat and followed her. She was standing by the boulder, looking out over the waters with a despair on her face that made him groan. It was so like what he felt in his heart. She pointed weakly toward the water, but her lips formed no words.

“Yes,” he answered, “it was not a dream.”

Dawn found them still sitting by the boulder. The man shook her half roughly.

“Come,” he said, “let us go back to the cabin.”

“No,” she answered. “I cannot



believe it; we are both mad. We are dreaming the same mad dream; let us go down, and when we feel the spray on our faces, and taste the brine, it will be time enough to believe."

She began the descent with reckless rapidity, and he followed, checking and holding her back. The roar of the surf grew momentarily louder, but though she looked at him with wild, grieved eyes, she went on. A monster wave dashed up over the rocks and wet them to the skin. She flung out her arms, and would have fallen headlong into the greedy, crawling water, but he caught her and made his way back. The hot, bitter tears on her face brought her to herself, and with one great sob she broke down, clinging to him and crying till from sheer exhaustion she fell asleep.

He carried her back to the cottage

## 24      The Master-Knot

and laid her gently on the bed in the tiny room. Her hair was falling about her, and he removed her dusty shoes, and covered her over as if she had been a child. Then he went out into the sunlight and sat down on the doorstep and tried to grasp the situation.

He had been a very ambitious man, and she had been as ambitious for him as he was for himself; that had been the main bond of union. He was to have made a great place in the world: the applause of listening senates was to have been his; wealth, fame, position, all the possibilities of life were gone; nothing but barely life itself remained. A living might be wrung from nature, but for ambition, — what? Surely somewhere on earth there were other human beings; the destruction, if irreparable, was not universal. Sooner or later some hardy sailor would find

the surviving peaks of this new Atlantis. At least, if the woman within was not his world, he was thankful that no one else was; and having looked the grim truth in the face, he too slept.

It was long past noon when the dog wakened him, and he started to his feet, determined that, having lost all else, they should keep their sound, clear brains. He walked about the park, which contained perhaps five hundred acres. There were half a dozen cows, as many horses, some burros, and a few chickens. There was a rude stable and a few farm implements. There was a large tunnel in the mountain-side, and some mining machinery lying about its entrance. The dog, seeming to realize some of the responsibilities of life, herded the cattle and drove them toward the

## 26      The Master-Knot

cabin. When they reached it, she was standing in the doorway. She had made her toilet, and looked fresh and calm.

“These are our flocks and our herds,” he said in greeting. “What shall we call them?”

She smiled rather wanly. “Was n’t it Adam who named the animals? You shall have that honor.”

“Very well,” he answered; “but if this is the garden, there is an angel with a flaming sword at the gateway. Do not pass it again. Our life is here, here, — do you understand? We must give ourselves time to get used to it, time to realize that we are alive. We must be very patient, for whatever has befallen us, whether we are in the body or out of it, this through which we have passed is a miracle, and only time can tell if it is more. Do not

The Master-Knot 27

look upon the change again, at least not now. You will stay here, and we will work together, and be content for awhile?"

"Content?" she said, "content? We will be happy."



## II

*There is always work,  
And tools to work withal, for those who  
will;  
And blessed are the horny hands of toil!*

LOWELL.





“**D**O you remember Gabriel Betteredge?” asked Adam, a day or so later, as he watched her set the house in order after their breakfast. “You know in times of great mental perturbation he always sought comfort and counsel from the pages of ‘Robinson Crusoe.’ When in doubt he waited until tomorrow, as Robinson advised; and no matter what his perplexities, he always found just what he wanted in that infallible book. If I remember correctly, but it’s years since I read it, Robinson goes on a voyage of discovery the first thing.”

“He built a raft to get away from the wreck first, I think,” she said reflectively. “Or did he build the

## 32      The Master-Knot

raft to get to the wreck? I can't remember. And then he built a house. Somewhere along there he wrote down his situation in a deadly parallel; I have sometimes wondered if he was the inventor of that style. But he offset the debit of being cast away with gratitude for having escaped with his life. We're not, at least I'm not, sure that belongs on the credit side."

"We don't want to do much exploring yet," he answered. "If we have no wreck to supply us with all sorts of things, we have a house ready to hand, not exactly as we would either of us have ordered it, I fancy, but better than we could build. Do you know what there is in it? We might begin our investigations here."

"With lamp in hand we will explore," she hummed, "but two rooms

and a cellar do not promise much. There is nothing to see in this room, except what we do see, and the contents of that chest, which is locked."

Adam tried the lock, then shook the chest. "There's nothing in it, anyhow," he said.

"As to the other room," she went on, "there is a bedroom set, — a better one than I should have expected to find in a place like this, — and a closet with some clothes in it. The man was about your size, but the feminine garments — well — they are all about the length of my bicycle skirt, and on the shelf there is a pile of bedding. There is no trap door leading into either subterranean or overhead apartments. In fact, there is nothing else, except a chair. It's very uninteresting."

Adam had been moving about the room, and stopped before the book-

## 34      The Master-Knot

shelf. He wound the clock mechanically, and read the titles of the books aloud. A chemistry, a book on electricity, a Bible, a worn copy of Tennyson, the "Yankee at King Arthur's Court," and a patent medicine almanac made up the list.

"There is one mysterious thing," he said, "and that is the packing cases out under the shed. I can't make up my mind what they contain, and I don't quite feel that we ought to open them; I should like to; they look as if they might hold —"

"Canned goods?" she said interrogatively.

"I was going to say books, but I suppose we need canned lobster more," he assented. "If you are sure they contain oats, peas, beans, or barley, or anything that the farmer knows, that would justify me in opening them."

## The Master-Knot 35

He took up a hatchet, and they went out and inspected the boxes, which were very large and strong.

“Let’s not open them yet,” she said. “There is one other treasure in one of the bureau drawers; it is a box with seeds of almost every kind. They ought to have known most of those things would n’t grow up this close to timber-line.”

“Probably they were sent by the congressman from this district,” Adam said dryly. “But I’m not so sure they won’t grow. Have you noticed how warm it is, how very unlike what it has always been? Let us go to the stables, and see what we can find there.”

They went up a path, past a garden, fenced with woven wire, through which the chickens looked longingly. Under some sashes forming a primitive

## 36      The Master-Knot

greenhouse, lettuce and radishes were making good headway. Nothing else had come up, though there were many beds, with small slips of board, like miniature tombstones, showing what had been planted. The stables and cow-barn were all under one roof, and would accommodate several horses and a few cows. There was hay and fodder in a lot adjoining, and a few ordinary farm implements, a plow, a harrow, and a cultivator in a shed addition.

“Do you know what it is for?” she asked mischievously, as he pulled out the plow.

“Do you think I never remembered the granger vote in my ambitions?” he answered. “I can plow, and I have planted and snapped corn, and cut fodder, and dug potatoes—I wonder if there are any here?”

## The Master-Knot 37

“Yes,” she answered; “in the cellar, at least a bushel, mostly gone to eyes, but I forget how thick to cut them. If we were only ‘The Swiss Family Robinson,’” she went on, “we should find yams and pineapples and oranges and sugar-cane and bananas coming up between the rocks. As it is, I am thankful to the congressman who sent the peas and morning-glories.”

“There is only about enough wheat and corn to plant fifteen acres,” Adam said, making a rough calculation in his mind. “I will plow a little over that, so as to have a patch for the potatoes, and get it ready as soon as possible.”

“I know how to plant corn and potatoes,” she said eagerly. “Just as soon as you get part of the land ready, I will begin. You didn’t know I was brought up on a ranch, did you?”

## 38      The Master-Knot

I never was very fond of recalling it. It is a perpetual round of conditions unlike any theory ever heard of." She shrugged her shoulders, and stopped at the rude table under the porch to crumb some slices of what looked like a kind of cornbread.

"What is it?" he asked curiously.

"That is to enable us to make light of our troubles," she replied solemnly. "Or, for thy more sweet understanding it is, or at least I hope it will be, yeast. I found a Twin Brothers yeast cake, and from it, behold the brethren! I know that raised bread is unhealthy, and that to get the worth of your money you ought to eat the bran also, and that the best bread, from the hygienic standpoint, is made from wheat-paste, and is about the consistency of sole leather; but even if yeast does shorten our lives, I don't



know that I shall give it up on that account.”

The planting of their crops took several weeks, and was very hard work, for neither of them was an expert farmer. When the corn and wheat came up there were almost no weeds, and the stand was better than usual for sod land; but they were kept busy warding off the horses and cattle that preferred the fresh young corn and wheat to the indifferent natural grass.

“I thought,” she said wearily, after driving away the intruders for the third time, — “I thought fences were a sign of civilization, but they seem to be the first necessity of the wilderness.”

She was sitting on a rock, fanning her flushed face with her sombrero, when Adam came to her assistance.

“You should have waited,” he said. “I was coming, but I had to hitch the

## 40      The Master-Knot

team.” He turned and looked at her, and laughed boyishly. “The run has n’t hurt you,” he said; “you look like a wild rose. I believe I shall call you so; may I? I can’t call you by the old name.”

She colored hotly, then turned quite pale, and there was a touch of reserve in her voice as she answered rather too indifferently, “If you choose, still I think, O Adam Crusoe, that Friday or Robinson would be a better name.”

“We’ll compromise on Robin,” he said. “A rose by any other name is just as sweet.”

“I wish we had a fence,” she said turning the subject hastily.

“We have,” he answered. “If we were to build one ourselves, it would have to be of rocks, but Nature has provided a magnificent stone barrier. We have only to drive the animals we

are not using through the gateway, and fasten that little wooden concern after them. There is good pasture outside, and if we need them we can go after them. Lassie will look after Daisy and Lily, won't you, little dog? I will go and open the gate and drive them through. You help Lassie keep those two back."

She stood undecidedly, and he turned and said gently, "I will come back without passing through the gateway. I will never pass it without you. I would n't dare. Now see how nicely Lassie will conduct this round-up."

As he went toward the gateway, her eyes followed him with a look he would hardly have comprehended, it was so full of relief and gratitude. He understood and reassured her without noticing her fears or smiling at

## 42      The Master-Knot

her weakness. Every day and many times she thanked God that, of all the men who might have been left by this modern deluge, it was Adam who had been with her and was with her in this terrible experience.

### *III*

*It might be months, or years, or days,  
I kept no count,—I took no note.*

*BYRON.*



**T**HEY had been on the island nearly four months. The corn was waving in the soft breeze, and the sun shone down hotly. Indoors sweet corn was boiling in the same pot with new potatoes, while in an improvised milk-boiler on coals, at one side of the fireplace, peas were simmering. The table was spread, and there was white bread and jersey butter and raspberries. Adam, with Lassie's puppies crawling over him, sat in the doorway, and watched Robin put the finishing touches to their Sunday dinner.

His apparel was somewhat picturesque, and he had a brown and thoroughly healthy look. Robin was dressed in a costume of blue denims.

## 46      The Master-Knot

The skirt was rather short, and the waist was a blouse, finished at the throat with a broad collar that turned away from a neck still white in spite of much sunlight. Their months of roughing it had not harmed them, and only the intense sadness in Adam's eyes, the pathetic droop of Robin's mouth, when they thought themselves unobserved, told a story different from that of pastoral content.

Their meal was unusually silent. Sometimes they fell into long lapses of silence; there was so much not to say. In all the weeks of the past they had worked, almost feverishly, allowing as little time as possible for thought, and never speaking of what was oftenest in their minds. Much of the time Adam seemed to be in a dream, only half realizing the flight of time, that made hope more and more hopeless.



Robin said nothing. One would not seek to console the sky with phrases if all the stars were wiped out. She half reproached herself at times for the peace, the something akin to happiness, that had crept into her life. She had long before grown very weary of the world and all it had to offer.

She was stung at the sight of Adam's quiet face, with the repressed suffering that had somehow touched it with a beauty it had not possessed, and she said impetuously, "Let us go out, Adam; let us go quite away somewhere, and talk. There is so much I want to ask you, but I have not dared."

He looked up with such a hurt expression that she went on quickly, "Not that; I mean I couldn't. I have been afraid to put things in words. They grow so much more real then.

## 48      The Master-Knot

But now I am afraid to keep my thoughts longer.”

They went past the wheat and corn fields, through a narrow cañon that led them to a valley they had never seen before. It was very beautiful, and the play of the sunlight on the high walls of rock, the murmur of the stream below them, the trembling aspens, the white peaks in the distance, made a scene worthy their attention, but they were blind to it.

They sat down on a broad stone seat; presently Adam said, “Now, tell me; tell me how it seems to you.”

“No,” she answered, “you must tell me. What has happened to us, Adam? Where are we, and why were we left?”

“God knows,” he said reverently.

“Do you think it possible,” she said slowly, “that we are dead?”

## The Master-Knot 49

“Oh, I don't know!” he broke out, with a return to something of his old childlike impatience. “Sometimes I think it is all a dream, and directly I shall wake up and find myself in my dingy old law office. But you are not a dream. These mountains are not a dream. Lassie barking down below there is not a dream; and these callous spots on my hands are real enough in all conscience, and no dream could last so long. Sometimes I think we have been hypnotized and carried off and left on an island somewhere. Sometimes—do you remember the man who computed the vast number of ‘mysterious disappearances,’ and formed a theory that the earth was being sorted out before the opening of the last vial, or some such stuff? Do you think we can be simply another disappearance?”

## 50      The Master-Knot

“I don't know,” she said. “It seems easier to believe that, easier to believe anything than that the whole world has disappeared.”

“Then I think sometimes,” he went on, “that there are evil powers, — I know this sounds as if I had lost my mind, and maybe I have, I'm not sure of anything, — but it seems as if there might be an explanation if we believed in genii who have power over us. Perhaps you and I, who so often found fault with the poor old earth, are being punished by banishment from it. Perhaps we are being prepared for some great work. I have n't very much religion, and yet I suppose I do believe in a divine purpose back of things, a directing power that wastes nothing. I have tried to think why this thing should come upon us, you and me, of all the world; and while it

seems an evil thing, a terrible and overwhelming disaster, when I realize that it might have befallen me alone, then just the fact that you are here makes it seem almost good. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she said quickly. "I have felt just so. When, at first, I felt as if I should curse God and die, I had only to remember you to fall on my knees for thankfulness. Even if a dozen other people had been left instead, no one would have understood as you have. Oh, I would infinitely rather be alone with you than in the utter loneliness of the society of a lot of men and women who would drive me mad with their complaints and inefficiency. I don't know whether it is a dream, or heaven or hell, or the work of some black magic; I only know that if it is a punishment it has been commuted, in

that you share it. And yet how selfish that sounds, as selfish as love itself. I ought to wish you were in a better, happier place, where you could carry out your ambitions—” She stopped, and her eyes filled.

“Don’t mind,” he said grimly. “If that is selfishness, I am selfish to the core. I have gone over the whole list, and I don’t know any one I would rather sacrifice to companionship with me in this exile than you. My parents were old; they could never have borne the shock. My sisters would be unhappy without their families; my women friends could none of them have met the exigencies of such an existence as you have; and as for men, by this we would all have been barbarians together. You have kept me sane and alive, for that matter.”

“But are we sane?” she said slowly, “I think I could stand it if I only knew we were sane and alive. It is the feeling that I don’t know anything, that this valley, these mountains, may fade like the baseless fabric of a dream. And sometimes I think that it may be real, all real but you, and that I shall find myself here all alone, dead or alive, sane or mad. God! how horrible it is!”

“That thought has never troubled me,” he said. “Whatever has put us in this dream together will keep us together to the end. You have not wanted me to go far away from you, so we have worked together; I have even let you do work that was unfit for you because I knew you would prefer it. You were more frank about it, but you did n’t feel any more strongly than I did. I could n’t,

## 54      The Master-Knot

I can't bear to have you out of my sight."

"Have you ever thought that it may be so?" she asked hesitatingly.

"What? That it is n't a dream, and that we are sane and alive? Yes, I have thought of that too. If it be true, how universal is the destruction? We know now, pretty well, from the time that has passed, — by the way, how long is it?" He stopped with a sudden dazed look, and turned to her.

"It was the first of May," she said softly. "Now it is nearly the last of August."

"Four months!" he said in a shocked tone. "I did not realize it; I must have been worse stunned than I thought. In that case it seems as if there can't be anything left of this continent, unless it be detached peaks here and there, where other mountain



ranges have been. There may be other men and women waiting as we wait for a sail, a sign, a message, and they do not know any more than we do whence it is to come. The alteration in the climate has convinced me that the waters on our West are those of the Pacific; it has been so warm and pleasant. I have tried to imagine what kind of a winter we may expect, or will the winter of our discontent be made glorious summer —”

“By three crops of strawberries, like California?” she interrupted.

“Perhaps,” he said, smiling. “As to the East, that may be the Atlantic, or the Gulf; it seems more probable that it is the latter. The St. Lawrence district was said to be the oldest section of this continent, and it is reasonable to suppose the earth’s crust thickest there, and along the mountain ranges.

## 56      The Master-Knot

I suppose the continent has gone to make another layer, a stratum, on top of the pliocene, and after awhile the waters will subside, or some volcanic action will raise up a new continent. If there are any ships anywhere, on any seas, they will search every degree of latitude and longitude. Our flag floats, did float, all over this globe; if it still flies anywhere, we shall see it again."

"If I did," she said irreverently, "I should feel sure we were in heaven. It was beautiful before, but what would n't it mean now, Adam? But have you any one left on earth; if this continent is all gone, who would look for you? There are people of my blood, or there were, but they did not even know of my existence."

"There is not a soul," he answered. "Indeed, in this country it would have

been one chance in ten million. You might have done it," he said, half jestingly, "but you are here."

"Yes," she echoed; "I am here. Adam, how long will it be before you are satisfied that no one is left, no one in the sense of any civilized people, with a country and means of circumnavigation?"

"A year," he answered, "perhaps more, but a year anyhow. I shall not give up hope until then."



#### IV

*How gladly would I meet  
Mortality my sentence, and be earth  
Insensible! How glad would lay me down  
As in my mother's lap!*

MILTON.



**T**HE corn hardened, and the wheat ripened, and was harvested in truly primeval fashion. Adam cut the wheat with a scythe, and Robin followed him, binding it as best she could. They shocked it together, and then began hauling it to the barn with the horses and bob-sleds, their only vehicle. The stacking was weary work and progressed slowly. Adam watched his co-worker toil over the sheaves, and then took them from her and pitched them on the stack haphazard.

“You shall not bother over it any more,” he said, “not if we live on hominy all winter. Have you ever been in Mexico? Well, Hawaii was called the land of poco tempo,

## 62      The Master-Knot

but Mexico was the land of mañana. There is n't any work there for the work's sake. I mean there was n't, and we can take a lesson from them. We need not hurry; the legislature will not meet this winter, and there will be no grand opera before spring. Daisy and Lily shall do our work for us. We will find a bit of hard, smooth ground, and then we will not muzzle the cows that tread out the grain."

"Willingly," gasped Robin, climbing down from her slippery eminence on top of the load of grain; "but do you think we are going to have any winter?"

"That is pre-eminently one of the things that no fellow can find out," he answered. "In a dream you are likely to have any kind of weather, and on a submerged planet we have no precedents at hand to tell us what to ex-



pect. By replanting the vegetables right along we have had a perpetual crop. As long as we have this kind of weather things will grow, and I suppose we would better let them. Shut in as we are, it doesn't seem likely that any very fearful winds are apt to trouble us; and if there is a wet season, on this slope we shall have good drainage. If the worst comes to the worst, there's the tunnel. Could you make that cheerful and home-like?"

Robin smiled rather sadly. "It will do to put the grain in," she said, and they walked on silently.

The spot finally selected for the threshing floor was brushed as clean as twig brooms would make it, and the wheat spread out upon it. Adam and Lassie drove the cows over it leisurely, and between times Adam

## 64      The Master-Knot

experimented on a flail. When he finally had one that answered the purpose, and found he could use it without fracturing his skull, the cows were released, and he went on with the work. Seated on a boulder close by, her sombrero tipped well over her eyes, Robin fanned the grain, and converted it into a coarse cracked wheat with a venerable coffee-mill.

“I will make you a Mexican mill, when I get through with this,” said Adam, “but you cannot use it, because it is too hard work; I shall have to be the miller. It is a rather simple affair, and dates from before the days of Noah; it is made with two stones, sandstone preferred, the lower of which is hollowed out bowl-fashion, with a hole in the centre; the upper stone is rounding, and fits in the bowl, and has a hole in it

## The Master-Knot 65

about four inches from the edge, in which a stout wooden handle is inserted, with which to turn it. The two stones are ground together until they become smooth. Then they are placed on four other stones as rests, and a blanket or cloth is spread underneath to catch the meal. The grain is poured around the edge of the upper stone, and works down. It makes a very tolerable flour."

"How handy you are!" she said. "Is n't it a good thing we had n't civilized the whole world to such a degree that only patent high-grade flour was used? Where should we be now without the simple devices of the good people of the Stone Age, and their survivors on whom we looked down with so much scorn?"

The snapping of the corn was an easier matter, and it was piled in the

## 66      The Master-Knot

tunnel till they should be ready to shell it. Then Adam did what he called his "fall plowing," and left the bare brown sod to lie fallow.

So far as possible, they had retained the manners and customs of the world that had left them. There was a tolerable supply of clothing, and a good deal more household linen than could have been expected. Robin concluded that the owners of the cabin had not been long married, and the bride, knowing to what kind of a place she was coming, had thought more of her house than of herself. All the feminine garments had to be re-fashioned. Robin made her skirts short enough for mountain climbing, and dreading the time when her one pair of shoes should give out, she wore sandals fashioned from yucca leaves by Adam's clever fingers. As the hair-

pins lost themselves, she braided her hair in a long queue, the curling ends of which fell far below her waist.

The little house was kept as neat and clean as if it were headquarters for all the labor-saving inventions in the world, and their meals were as well served as if a corps of servants had been in attendance. They were simple, and often a little monotonous, as meals must be where there is nothing save what grows on one's own plantation. They had no tea, coffee, sugar, spices, or foreign fruits. However, the hardship of manual labor and plain food would cure most cases of dyspepsia, and they did not suffer.

One day early in December, Robin woke to the consciousness of a steady drip, drip of rain, accompanied by an indescribably mournful wind. In the other room she heard Adam piling on

## 68      The Master-Knot

the logs, and shivered. Perhaps the winter had come. It had been hard enough when there was plenty of work, and the free outdoor life; if they should become prisoners, how should they, how would *he* endure it? She dressed quickly, and met his cheery "good-morning" in kind, and over their breakfast they discussed the possibility of this storm being the first of many. They decided that they must get the corn into such shape that the tunnel would be available for the hapless cattle, or even for themselves, if need be.

"We will go up there and shell corn all day," said Adam. "It isn't really cold, and you can wrap up a bit. I wish I had thought to take a lot of stone into the tunnel to build a bin at the end to put the corn in. I don't know how we are to manage it."

She disappeared into the bedroom and came back presently with a few grain sacks. When Adam opened the door he was nearly ready to abandon his plan.

“You will be wet through,” he said; “I cannot let you go.”

“Then you cannot go either,” she answered.

“But I must,” he said. She was standing by him, hardly reaching his shoulder, the sacks over her head. Catching her up in his arms, he banged the door behind them, and ran up the slope to the tunnel, where he deposited her laughing, and shaking the water from her curly hair. As he had said, it was not cold, and they sat down near the mouth of the tunnel, turned the tops of their sacks back over corn-cobs, and shelled the corn in silence. At last a little sigh from Robin made

70      The Master-Knot

Adam look up quickly. Her hands were bleeding.

“Robin,” he cried angrily, “how can you be so cruel! I don’t want you to do this work; there is no need. I forgot to watch you; besides, I know you are tired. You did not sleep last night; I heard you moving about.”

“Then you did not sleep either,” she responded quickly.

He flushed through the tan, and scooping some dry leaves together into a bed, took off his coat and folded it for a pillow.

“Lie down and rest a little now,” he said, “while I go down to the house and see what I can find for lunch. Then you can have a good sleep this afternoon.”

He was gone several minutes, and when he came back with some sandwiches in a tin bucket, and a dozen



scarlet radishes dripping in his hand, he stopped appalled. Robin was at the extreme end of the tunnel, sitting on the ground, laughing and crying and talking extravagant nonsense. Had she really gone mad, at last? Adam put down the bucket, and walked toward her unsteadily. She did not stir, but went on chattering in the same absurd way, until she saw him; then she cried excitedly, "Oh, look! it's kittens, real little tame kittens, though their mother won't come near me yet. She is over in that corner."

Adam saw her green eyes, and though distrustful she was not unfriendly. Emptying the bucket, he ran down to the sheds, and came back with some milk which he poured into the top of the pail, and set down before the kittens. They lapped it

## 72      The Master-Knot

eagerly, and as the two human beings withdrew discreetly, the cat crept out of her corner and joined in the feast. When it was over, Robin took possession of one tiny ball of fur, and Adam of another, while they made their own meal. Then Robin curled up among the dead leaves, and slept like a child.

It was growing dusk when Adam awoke from his day-dreams. The tunnel looked like a small grain elevator. On one side Robin still slept, but the old cat was nestled contentedly at her feet, and the kittens were playing sleepily over her.

“What is she dreaming?” Adam asked wearily. “All day I have sat here and dreamed dreams that can never come true. I know it; I feel it. I told her a year, but I am as sure now as I shall be in six years, that there is no hope. The watch-fire is

out to-night, — the first night in eight months. I shall re-light it for her sake; not that she is any more deceived than I, but she will be happier to believe me still hopeful. What will be the end of it all? How can it end?”

“The same old way,” came a sleepy voice from the leaves, “with the ‘got married and lived happily ever after’ formula.” She sat up and rubbed her eyes, and stretched lazily, to the discomfort of the kittens, who retreated hastily. As she struggled to her feet and a knowledge of her surroundings, her face changed pitifully, and she sat down again and cried miserably.

“Oh, it was so real!” she sobbed. “I can see it now. We were back in the old house, in the library, don’t you remember it? and Walter was at

## 74      The Master-Knot

the piano, and Louis had just asked me how to finish his last story. Did I answer out loud? Oh, which is the dream, for that was as real as this!”

Adam stood and watched her. He tried not to think of that apropos answer. He heard the beating, steady patter of the rain, and the lowing of the cows, and there was not even a star in heaven to look at him from its accustomed place with a friendly, twinkling promise for the future. There was nothing left. So far as he was concerned, the earth was without form and void. There was nothing to wait or hope for. There was nothing to live for, neither cheerful yesterdays nor confident to-morrows. What was the use in living? He looked down at the slender creature lying outstretched almost at his feet, shaken with the agony of long-

## The Master-Knot 75

repressed grief, and then at his long, muscular hands. How little it would take to end it all for both of them! A mist came over his eyes and he stooped, his hands outstretched toward her white throat. They fell on the rounded curve of her shoulder. He checked the caress as he checked the other impulse and shook her instead.

“Let us go home,” he said.

They went into the storm.



V

*Why wilt thou take a castle on thy back  
When God gave but a pack?  
With gown of honest wear, why wilt thou  
tease  
For braid and fripperies?  
Learn thou with flowers to dress, with birds  
to feed,  
And pinch thy large want to thy little need.*

FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE.





**T**HE next morning dawned clear and warm, and Adam, coming in with his milk-pails, held out his hand to Robin. There were three ripe strawberries.

“See,” he said, “they are the harbingers of spring, or a California climate, and either way makes our gain. California without fogs and fleas is heavenly enough for most people.”

Nevertheless, they completed the shelling of the corn, and made a bin for it at the end of the tunnel, removing the cat family to the house, where Lassie viewed their advent with jealous eyes. One day when they had been hulling corn for nearly a week, Adam sat down and began laughing. “Do you know how much corn it takes to plant an acre?” he asked.

## 80      The Master-Knot

“No,” said Robin, blankly. “I know something about the number of kernels to the hill, — ‘one for the cut-worm, and one for the crow, and one for something-or-other else, I forget what, and one to grow.’ Why?”

“It takes eight quarts to plant an acre. We have raised about thirty bushels to the acre, which is very well for sod. That will make over fifteen thousand pounds of meal and hominy, and will feed us for seven years, even if we eat six pounds daily. Unless there is a winter season, when we must do something for the animals, there is not the slightest use in planting more than an acre. As to the wheat, even with a light yield, there would be fifteen hundred pounds to the acre. We have fresh vegetables all the time, and there will be any quantity of potatoes and cabbage and beans.”

## The Master-Knot 81

“And yet people starved everywhere, and it seemed to me that the farmers were the worst off of all.”

“They farmed to make money, not to live, and they had no control over the markets. They had to sell or build barns. It is only Dives who can afford to tear down the old ones and build greater. It was easier for them to sell cheap to a man who took their wheat and held it until it could be sold back to them as dear flour. They were eaten up with mortgages and pests and interest. Have you noticed that there are almost no insects here, not even flies and mosquitoes? They were never so bad in the mountains, and apparently they have been wiped out with the rest.”

“Truly, Adam,” she said, “speaking just of the physical part of it, would you regret this year?”

## 82      The Master-Knot

He stood up and stretched out his arms, a splendid type of manhood, smooth-shaven, with clear-cut features, bronzed, square-shouldered, and powerful.

“Oh, you are magnificent!” she cried involuntarily. “It has done you good, great good. You are twice the man you were in strength and health and resource; and if only we had been cast away on an island, knowing we were sure to be rescued some day soon, I should not be sorry at all.”

He colored and answered frankly: “Without the mental strain, I should not regret this year. Sometimes, when I am sure it is a dream, and that presently we shall waken, I can’t help wondering whether we shall not wish we had fretted less and enjoyed it more. When I come to think of

it, I believe it is the first time since I was a child that ways and means have not troubled me. It was a good thing to work as we have, to keep our minds employed, but now that we are sure that starvation is five or six years away, we might as well drop the old, head-long rush to get more than we need. That has been the trouble ever since men began to make history. It was the same thing,—power, conquest, riches, everything; too much to eat, too much to drink, too much to wear —”

“Well, you can’t say that of us,” said Robin ruefully, looking down at her made-over gown.

“Well, perhaps not, and I don’t mean that there ever was a time when there was a general surfeit, but I mean that was the tendency. There would have been plenty for all, if part had

## 84      The Master-Knot

not taken more than their share; as for the other part who had not enough, they only longed for the opportunity to simulate their unwise betters. When they could, they took too much, too; if it was only to drink and forget their misery. We could have lived so well and so easily, if we had lived more simply, coming more directly in contact with nature, as we have this year.”

She shook her head doubtfully. “This has not been real life at all. We have only kept alive. We haven’t read anything or done anything or helped any one—”

“Except each other and the animals dependent on us. On the whole, I don’t know but that we have accomplished about as much as when we were devoting most of our attention to paying board and rent bills. We have helped each other more than we

can measure. We should have died had we been left alone with our thoughts. All of life is not in cities, nor even in books.”

She did not answer for some moments, and then said slowly, “If it were a dream, and we were going back to the old life, what would you regret most?”

“If we were going back to the world we know, I should regret a good many things; first, I suppose, that I did not realize sooner that we must be going back, instead of letting myself be utterly overwhelmed. Then I think I should be sorry that I didn’t practise, à la Demosthenes, when I had a whole coast to myself, and most of all I should regret that we have not kept a record of our lives from day to day. There is other writing I should want to do,—but there is no paper, and I don’t know how to make any.”

## 86      The Master-Knot

“There is plenty of time to do all that yet,” she said. “What else would you wish you had done?”

He looked at her, for there was something in her voice he did not understand, but her eyes were turned from him. “I should regret that we had not talked more. Do you know, we have been very silent? And we used to have so many things to talk over in the old days. I should have twinges of remorse that I did not make more of your companionship when I had it, instead of raising more corn than we can eat in half a dozen years, and letting you tear your hands shelling it.” He stooped and kissed one of her slender hands. She withdrew it quickly; there had never been even a touch of the sentimental between them.

“What would you regret?” he asked suddenly.



## The Master-Knot 87

She shrank a little, and her eyes looked far away, past the gateway. "Some of the things you mention; very much that I had not encouraged you more to go on with your work, but mainly —"

"Well, mainly?"

She jumped down from the rock where she had been sitting, and answered evasively, "I don't think there is any mainly, unless it is that when I had such a good chance to be a hermit, I couldn't remember all those wonderful Mahatma practices that make one so good and so wise. The only formulas I have really tried hard to recall are for cooking without sugar, or spice, or fruit."



## VI

*Heap on more wood! — the wind is chill;  
But let it whistle as it will,  
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.*

SCOTT.



**I**T was Christmas Eve, and the night being in a reminiscent mood, was chillier than usual. Adam piled up the logs till the whole room was full of the warm glow. "Let us hang up our stockings," he said, with an attempt at gayety.

Robin spread out her hands with a gesture of comic distress. "If only I had a pair to hang!" she said. "But they gave boxes in England, didn't they? I noticed that the rain the other day seemed to have come through the shed roof, and I fear the contents of those packing cases may be the worse for it, especially if they happen to be sugar. Do you think it would do to make ourselves presents of them? If you do, please give me the smaller box; I am sure

## 92      The Master-Knot

it has hair-pins and needles and darning-cotton in it."

Adam laughed. "We will give them to each other," he said, "and perhaps you'll find some stockings in your box, if there is no box in your stockings. We can dream of their contents all night, and — who knows? — we may have a merry Christmas, after all."

Robin hardly knew the place next morning. Adam had risen early and decked every available spot with kinnikinnick until the room fairly glistened. "I wish I knew how to thank him," she said.

"Do you like it?" he said, as he came in. "I was afraid I should waken you putting it up."

"Like it!" she answered, "Why, Adam, it is beautiful. You are just an ideal Santa Claus."

## The Master-Knot 93

When they had finished their breakfast they went out and looked at the boxes.

“You must open yours first,” she said; “it’s so big I know it doesn’t contain anything nice, so we would better save mine till the last, and then I can divide with you. What do you think it is? You shall have three guesses.”

“It might be a piano from its size,” he ventured.

“No,” she said decidedly. “It’s not the right shape.”

“Or perhaps it’s a feather-bed; I don’t know of anything I want less.”

“It’s too large for that; now guess, really.”

“As a matter of fact, I expect it is mining machinery, which will be about as much use as another chimney; but here goes to find out.” He brought

94      The Master-Knot

his hatchet down vigorously between the boards at one end, where a slight crevice promised some leeway.

“Oh, do be careful,” she cried “even if there’s nothing in it but stove-polish and excelsior, the nails and the boards are absolute treasures!”

He proceeded more gently. There was any amount of hoop-iron, which he removed carefully, and the nails were drawn with as much caution as if they had been teeth, as they well might be, considering there were no more on earth to draw. When the top of the box was finally off, and a quantity of papers removed, they gave a simultaneous cry of delight. The box was full of books. They took them out, one at a time, with little exclamations of pleasure, as an old friend came to light. Sitting down on the ground they piled the books



about them on the papers, and opening favorites here and there read to each other and themselves till long after noon. It was really a fine library, well chosen, covering a wide range of subjects and including an encyclopædia and an unusually fine edition of Shakespeare.

“Is n’t it the most beautiful Christmas present you can imagine, Adam?” she said. “If you are not suited with this it must be because, in the old slang, you ‘want the earth.’”

“But we have n’t even opened your box,” he said.

“I don’t want to,” she answered slowly. “Somehow I feel as if we would better stop now and let well enough alone. Let us enjoy this awhile. Perhaps the other box may spoil this one, or at least the day.”

## 96      The Master-Knot

Adam laughed with good-natured tolerance. "How absurd!" he said. "Let us see what there is. You know you said yours would be the nicest; besides, if it contains sawdust and last year's almanacs, I shall have to divide with you, and we may quarrel over the Shakespeare." He opened the box while she stood watching him with a strange unwillingness. It had been labeled, "This Side Up," and on the very top there was a wooden case. He put it in Robin's arms, and she opened it with trembling fingers. She replaced the broken strings, adjusted the bridge, tucked the violin under her chin, tuned it, and straightway escaped from every sorry care of earth.

Adam went on unpacking the box. It contained chiefly materials for writing, — all the paraphernalia that the

fastidious student requires. There were many note-books, and at the bottom a large, handsomely inlaid writing-desk. The name on the cover made him start and call her. She put down the violin reluctantly, and then stooped and kissed the vibrating wood with sudden feeling.

“It is a Steiner,” she said. “You know the story of Steiner’s violins, do you not? No? Some day, perhaps, I may tell you. Can you open the desk?”

He found the key and unlocked it. There were some letters, a few papers and memoranda, and a journal. Adam turned to the last page written, and read: —

“Have just completed arrangements for transportation of my effects to the mountains. Close study of various phenomena convinces me that I may have been in error,

## 98      The Master-Knot

and that the cataclysm is much closer at hand than I have thought. Within a few months I shall burn this book, and confess that I should be written down an ass, or turn to it to prove myself a prophet. From the eyrie I have chosen I expect to be able to write the story of the coming deluge. It will be of great value to posterity to have a calm, scientific account, quite free from any tinge of superstition or religion. I have to-day written my Boston skeptics, forwarding copies of my calculations, with references to former inundations, and reasons for believing the Rocky Mountain region the safest at this time. All geologists agree that — ”

Here the journal terminated abruptly.

Robin hardly seemed to comprehend its full significance; or possibly she was not surprised. She touched the book as gently as if it were the napkin over the face of the dead.

“ It is not to the wise that God has

revealed himself," she said softly. "Where is the hand that wrote this? You must finish it, Adam. Here are the blank pages waiting for such a chapter as was never written on earth."

But Adam only looked at the half-written page unseeingly. "It is all true, then," he muttered to himself; "it is all true." He walked away with a painful precision of motion, almost as if he were drunk; he neither heard nor saw anything, yet was conscious of everything, and while he thought he had been hopeless before, he knew now that he had never given up hope, never until that moment ceased to expect a rescue.

Robin took her violin and went indoors. Presently he heard its liquid notes stealing out to him, like a power unknown and divine, brushing its

## 100 The Master-Knot

fingers across his heart, the harp of a thousand strings. She played for a long time, and when she ceased, in some strange way he felt that he was comforted.

## VII

*The World is too much with us; late and  
soon  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our  
powers;  
Little we see in nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid  
boon.*

*Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,—  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less  
forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed  
horn.*

WORDSWORTH.





**T**HEY had been sitting by the fire in silence for a long time. Robin had been sewing, but the blaze had sunk too low to see by it, and her hands were folded idly upon her mending. She put it by, and went to the window. It was a very dark night, and the stars shone brilliantly. The stars had come to mean a great deal to them both, howbeit neither had ever said so. The stars only were unchanged. "The thoughts of God in the heavens" were the same, whatever might be His thought on earth.

She sighed so heavily, that Adam asked quickly, "What is it?" and she answered, with a nervous laugh, "I was thinking of the old legend, that

## 104 The Master-Knot

the souls on other planets call ours 'the sorrowful world.' What made it so sorrowful, Adam?"

"Ignorance would cover it all," he answered, "but to be specific, intemperance, sensuality, avarice, and poverty. I don't mean drunkenness only, when I say intemperance. I have known a few prohibitionists in my time who were as intemperate in their eating as any one could be in the matter of drink. I think intemperance in its widest sense was the great curse of our time anyway; drink and tobacco and tea and coffee; and as to our eating, there was too much, of almost everything on earth that was not food, but which could be over-salted and over-peppered, and treated with tabasco sauce. We over-stimulated every activity of the body, and spent our lives doing all kinds of things in which

there was no sense. Think of reading one or two morning and evening papers every day. To be sure we said there was nothing in them, but we used up our eyesight over them, and let a stream of silliness and scandal dribble through our minds. As to the things we wore — ”

Robin laughed. “I know,” she said. “The sewing-machine didn’t save work; it only made ruffles. A dressmaker once said to me, ‘It’s a good thing for me that these women have n’t sense enough to spend their time and money on themselves, in making their bodies free and strong and beautiful. But no; they would rather have a stylish dress than a graceful body. They don’t care to be beautiful themselves; all they want is a handsome gown to cover their ugliness.’ Isn’t it strange that we

## 106 The Master-Knot

never seemed able to realize that the Greek fashions were immortal because they were beautiful?"

"Still, I don't think the dress of the Greek women would be very convenient for housework," ventured Adam.

Robin shook her head. "You only say that because some woman has said it to you. The Diana of the Stag wore the first rainy-day gown. The Greek dress was capable of ever so many modifications. If I were making a handbook of proverbs for women, I should say, 'A good complexion is rather to be chosen than many fine dresses, and glossy and abundant hair turneth away wrath.' I believe in the simplification of life. I understand just how Thoreau felt when he threw out that specimen because it had to be dusted daily. There are very few things beautiful enough

## The Master-Knot 107

to pay for that amount of trouble. But perhaps that is because I don't care for specimens, and I loathe dusting."

"You ought to have been a Jap," said Adam. "There was one in college, in my class, and one day when I was fretting over something I could not afford he said, in that immensely polite way of theirs, 'You I cannot understand. With all American people it so is, even as by Ruskin said was it; whatever you have, of it you more would get, and where you are, you would go from. You happy are only when something you get, and never that you yourself are.' But I think the Celestial was wrong there. When a man is self-conscious of illy-made garments, a mean domicile, a poor kind of half education, he is uncomfortable; he hasn't accomplished his

## 108 The Master-Knot

evolution from the conscious, the self-conscious, to the unconscious. It was this very discomfort and inequality that used so to enrage me, for it need not have been."

"I wish," said Robin, "we knew how to make paper; of all the fascinating things in Bellamy's 'Equality,' there was nothing I liked so well as the idea of paper garments, to be burned when one got through with them. Think of never having any washing and ironing, and always having new clothes."

"I wonder whether we could invent some of those things over again," said Adam, reflectively.

"I could n't spare you any of my precious rags, if you could," said Robin.

"Most of the paper was made out of wood, anyhow," answered Adam, "and the ash that grows here in any

quantity was considered particularly fine for that purpose.”

“‘God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions,’” quoted Robin, “and now we are going to seek them over again. I can’t imagine how anyone could ever make a lineotype, but the type and the hand-press are easy enough, and if you can make paper, we may yet live to read our ‘published works.’ You probably do not know that I used to have a Wegg-like facility for dropping into poetry.”

“Did you? That is another of the things you never told me; but your speaking of Thoreau,” answered Adam, “recalls what he said of the amount of work necessary to sustain life beside Walden Pond. It took six weeks out of the year, and that was in a most forbidding country. In such a valley

## 110 The Master-Knot

as this two months ought to be sufficient to more than feed and clothe us; but then he did n't have to make his own clothing."

"And out of nothing particular," interrupted Robin.

Adam laughed and went on. "Did you ever hear of a man called Hertzka? He was an eminent Austrian sociologist, and he figured it out, that if five million men should work a little less than an hour and three quarters a day they could produce all the necessities of life for the twenty-two million people of Austria. By working two hours and twelve minutes daily for two months beside, they could have all the luxuries also. And that not for a few, not for the Court and the nobility, but for all. There could have been music and pictures and books and theatres, and sufficient



food and clothing. Isn't it strange that when we might have been so happy we preferred to be so wretched? For even if we had all we wanted ourselves, we could not escape the sights and sounds that told of abject misery."

"It was always so," Robin answered moodily. "The poor we had always with us. History always repeated itself."

"Still, it did n't exactly repeat itself," Adam said. "Our dark age would have done for a golden age in the past. Greece was glorious for a little while, but her literature tells us of her ideals. The isles of Greece, where Byron contracted his last illness, would have left him to die among the rocks twenty-five hundred years earlier, because he had a lame foot. We at least were kinder to animals, and that means a great deal."

## 112 The Master-Knot

“I don't know,” she answered. “Perhaps ; it seems to me I have read of a hospital for sick animals on the island of Ceylon a long sometime B. C. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu—or was it Lady Hester Stanhope?—said she had traveled all over the world, and had never found but two kinds of people,—men and women. I fancy the same thing is true of all the ages as well as all the countries.”

“No,” Adam said, shaking his head ; “our ideals change. The scheme of life laid down by Christ was to the Greeks foolishness and to the Jews a stumbling-block, and there were plenty of Greeks and Jews in our day. By Greeks I mean people whose ideals were purely intellectual, and by Jews those who saw no good save a material good, no God but the God of Mammon. They would not hear

## The Master-Knot 113

either Moses or the prophets, and the statute of limitations was as near as they could come to the Sabbatic year. The Greek and the Jew have stood ready with their cup of hemlock, their crown of thorns for every Christ-spirit that has ever come to earth. Yet more people read Socrates, and believed on the Nazarene every year. I don't mean in the church; the working-man did not go to church, but he uncovered his head at the name of Christ, the first lawgiver who confounded the scribes and Pharisees, and ate with publicans and sinners."

"But Moses was the first lawgiver to forbid taking the nether millstone as a pledge," objected Robin.

"True," he admitted, "and the laws of Moses would have made the world over. He was the greatest writer on political economy this earth

## 114 The Master-Knot

has ever seen. His absolute fiat against the alienation of the land would have done more for the common people than all Adam Smith's theories of free competition, and Fourier's dream of a perfected communism. But who would have known of Moses, save for Christ? The Old Testament would have been merely the sacred book of the Hebrews, and save as a literary and historic work, of very uncertain historic value, would have been unread, as the Koran and other books of a similar nature were unread."

"And yet you do not believe in the divinity of Christ," she said slowly.

"No," he answered. "Is that necessary before one can believe in his teachings? The truth is always divine. What difference does it make whether the one who utters it be human or

## The Master-Knot 115

divine, bond or slave, Æsop or Marcus Aurelius? the truth remains the same. A fable is only another name of a parable. We have the story of the lost sheep; that's a parable; and that of the lamb that muddied the stream, and that's a fable. One is sacred, the other profane, but both are fables, both parables. When you take them away from the context it is as easy to feel for the lamb eaten by the wolf, as for the one that was rescued, and has been immortalized in picture and song."

"Probably you are right," she said. "I never thought of it in just that way before," and saying "good night" she went to her room.

Adam thought he heard her humming, "Away on the mountains cold and bare."



## VIII

*When we mean to build  
We first survey the plot, then draw the  
model,  
And, then we see the figure of the house,  
Then must we rate the cost of the erection.*

SHAKSPERE.





**T**HE discovery of the incomplete journal made a subtle change in Adam. He had been silent and self-absorbed from the first, but he had never quite given up hope. Even now, Robin sought to keep up the pretence, and dreading the despair which she saw creeping over Adam, she began artfully to seek some means of interesting him in something else. The question of a proper place for the books gave her an opportunity, and Adam suggested that he build an addition to the house.

They planned it as eagerly as if it was to be a castle, and spent days in looking for adobe, but finally decided that logs would be better, and Adam's

## 120 The Master-Knot

ax could have been heard ringing from morning till night. A log house is not exactly a work of art, but it requires no little skill to build one, and takes a good deal of time when the logs for the floor must be planed and squared, so as to make a matched board floor. Sometimes Robin went with Adam, and worked or read; sometimes she took him his luncheon at noon, for the trees were at some little distance from the house. The logs had to be "snaked" across the rough ground and down the mountain, and when the floor had been laid, and the location of the window decided upon, Robin planted morning-glory seeds where it was to be. By dint of much pushing and hauling the logs were finally put in place, and the roof battened down. The window was truly worthy of a mediæval castle,

for it was simply an oblong hole, boxed in with a casement made from some scraps of boards, while a slab shutter, swung on leather hinges, shut out the elements.

The chinking was a simple matter, and when it was all done, including a doorway into the main room, Robin was unfeignedly delighted. They made rows of shelves with the packing-cases, and arranged the books thereon. It was not an extensive library, but it occupied one side of the room, and was a godsend to them. Under the window Robin placed the green covered desk, and placed on it Adam's writing materials. Along the inside wall Adam built a bunk, after the fashion in miners' cabins, and with a mattress stuffed with the soft inner cornhusk, and a pillow from the other room, and blankets from the one tiny

## 122    The Master-Knot

closet, the couch looked sufficiently inviting. On the floor Robin spread mats made from plaited cornhusk, and in the doorway hung a portière, woven from the same material on a loom that a Navajo might not have utterly despised.

Adam's scanty wardrobe was transferred to pegs in one corner of the room, one or two stools were set first here, then there, until Robin was sure the best effect had been secured, and when all was done that they could accomplish with the means at hand, and the morning-glory blossoms came peeping in at the window, the room was by no means unattractive.

Then Robin's housewifely soul took refuge in house-cleaning, and she scrubbed and arranged and re-arranged, while Adam repaired or invented furniture, until inside and out their little

domain was as perfect as they could make it.

Between them there had again fallen one of those long silences they dreaded, but seemed powerless to prevent. As the voice of the turtledove was lifted in the plaintive notes of nesting time, Adam harrowed three acres of the plowed land and planted it in wheat and corn. The perennial garden was flourishing, and there was nothing to do. Adam said so one day, with an air of calm finality.

Robin regarded him uneasily. The time had not yet come when he could sit down and write, though she had brewed an excellent ink, and the paper waited on the desk in his room. She considered for a moment, then said brightly, "Don't you remember what Myron used to say? How when his friends got rich they first built a beau-

## 124 The Master-Knot

tiful house, and then went abroad for three years? Let us go traveling; would n't you like it?"

The alacrity with which he acquiesced proved how well he liked it, and he started out at once to get the burros, and make ready for the expedition.

Robin baked and prepared as well as she could.

"It's a good thing I had a Southern grandmother," she soliloquized, as she put her beaten biscuit in the Dutch oven and pulled the coals over it. "And it's a good thing my mother crossed the plains and learned how to make biscuit in the mouth of her flour sack, and," as she rolled out some crackers, "it is a blessed good thing I went to cooking-school, but I wish that, instead of being so particular about the knobs on the candlesticks,

## The Master-Knot 125

the Pentateuch had given Sarah's recipe for making cakes with honey. Not that I have any honey, but I am sure we shall find some on this trip."

When they were all ready, and the burros stood waiting at the door, with Lassie jumping wildly about them, Adam wrote a placard which he stuck in the framework of the door. The stock had been turned loose on the mountain-side, and the house and stables secured as well as possible against any storms that might arise. The kittens had possession of one of the sheds. The puppies were to accompany them.

Robin had put on her long unused shoes, and a new gown that she had made out of a dark blue serge found hanging in her room. Adam looked at her approvingly from under his wide sombrero. She turned back,

126    The Master-Knot

after going a few paces, and read the card.

W A I T !

A P R I L 5th.

*Back in two weeks.*

*Look for smoke.*

As she passed into the cañon that hid their home from sight, Adam saw her brush her hand across her eyes.



## IX

*I pity the man who can travel from Dan  
to Beersheba and cry, "'Tis all barren."*

STERNE.



**T**HEY traveled a due west course, crossing the two ranges, wending their way through dim defiles and along precipitous cañons, until they saw the sea. Here its mood was summer-like. Even in the short time that had elapsed it had worn itself a broad, smooth beach, and wide tracts of land between the sand and the base of the mountains proved that the earth had been thrown up, or that the water had receded. They had not looked upon the ocean before for many months.

They picketed the burros on the rank, salt grass, and built their camp-fire early, and while Robin set the potatoes baking, and began her supper preparations, Adam went scouting along

## 130 The Master-Knot

the coast. In less than half an hour he came back with a quantity of clams which he threw down before her as proudly as if they had been foreign battle-flags. She gave a little feminine shriek of delight.

“Now I know why we brought that inconvenient iron pot,” she said; “bring it here, please.”

Adam brought it, and watched her slice up onions and potatoes and stir in the various ingredients.

“It is going to be the best chowder you ever tasted,” she said, “even if we haven’t any bacon. When you write the veracious tale of our adventures, Adam, don’t put in how many things we ate.”

“They might think it a voracious tale if I did,” he answered, dropping some more butter into his mealy potato. “Do you remember how the

## The Master-Knot 131

Swiss Family were always worrying for fear they wouldn't have enough to eat?"

"Yes, and how they went out and killed an elephant for breakfast, and a herd of wild pigs for dinner, and had a buffalo apiece for supper. And don't you remember how, when the boa constrictor killed one of their zebras, little Fritz asked pathetically if boas were good to eat?"

They laughed over their supper, and then having made sure that they were out of reach of the tide, and the fire would keep, and the rifle was close at Adam's elbow, they spread their blankets and said "good night." It had been an exciting day.

It was past midnight, and the moon was waning when Adam was wakened by Lassie's cold muzzle against his face. He sat up and called to Robin.

## 132 The Master-Knot

There was no answer, and her blankets lay tossed on the other side of the fire. He started up and listened. At first he heard only the sound of the sea; then there came mingled with it the clear notes of her glorious voice. Holding Lassie in check he went down to the beach.

Robin stood well out on the shimmering sand, the waves lapping softly almost at her feet, and he heard the plaintive music, and caught the words, —

“Oh, for the wings, for the wings of a dove,  
Far away, far away, would I fly, and be, and be  
at rest.”

Her voice quivered when she came to the words, “In the wilderness build me a nest,” but she sang on, and Adam recalled the words of hymn after hymn, anthem after anthem, for

she sang nothing else. He heard the bitter cry of the De Profundis, Handel's triumphant "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and then she began, "He watching over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps."

His eyes filled, and he saw the tents of his regiment. She had written by every mail, and across her letters, at the top or bottom, she had put those five bars from "Elijah." Though he did not believe it, for he had not the early Hebrew ability to see Israel in his own race, and the to be spoiled Philistine in every Filipino, it had comforted him in that sickening campaign. Surely, surely if he, an American "non-com," had spared a Filipino now and then, He watching over Israel had not been less merciful.

Her voice died away; it was the first time she had sung that year,

## 134 The Master-Knot

though she was a very perfectly trained musician. Indeed in the old days, Adam had first sought her acquaintance because of her music.

Adam returned to the camp; he knew instinctively that she preferred to keep this to herself. He was lying quite still when she came back, and controlled every muscle when she bent over him. She regarded him intently for a moment, then went to her blankets with a heavy sigh that Adam knew was for him. She had sung out her own sorrows.

Their vigils seemed to do them both good, for they shook off their melancholy tendencies, and before the end of the first week their tour was beginning to be thoroughly enjoyable. They did not find cocoanuts and bananas, but they did find plenty of strawberries, and long, prickly vines



that would be covered with raspberries, and wild grapes and choke-cherries and currants, which they planned to transplant, for though the Western coast was more beautiful, and in some respects more convenient than their hedged in valley, they preferred the valley. Already it had come to mean home.

They traveled about fifty miles southward, to the end of the island, making desultory trips up into the mountains to see if anywhere, on land or sea, there was a friendly wreath of smoke, and every night their watchfire glowed from the highest peak in their vicinity. The island narrowed to a single range, detached peaks rising here and there from the sea. As they rounded the southernmost point, Adam said, "We ought to name it; that remarkable Swiss family always named places."

## 136 The Master-Knot

Robin looked at the bare, stone walls rising sheer above the waves three hundred feet, and her lip curled.

“Let us call it the Cape of Good Hope,” she said.

“In the name of wonder, why?” asked Adam, and she answered, “Because we are past it,” and then would have given anything to have recalled the bitter words.

The Eastern coast was wilder and more picturesque, but the traveling was correspondingly slower. Something in the formation of the coast caused a terrific surf, and at many places there was scarcely any beach, and they found themselves compelled to climb along trails that made even the burros dizzy.

When they had been absent ten days, Robin said, “I begin to feel like a grandmother; no, I don’t mean that

I feel so old, but that I begin to long to see the chicken and cat-children, and the new calf, and — everything.”

Adam laughed, “ I have been thinking we ought to hurry ; that place of ours is growing so entrancingly lovely in memory that last night I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls ! ”

They were not to reach home without at least one adventure, however. A day or so later, as they toiled up a painfully steep ascent, Lassie sounded the note of alarm, and catching up the rifle, Adam ran ahead. As he rounded a point in the rocks, he came upon a Rocky Mountain goat engaged in combat with a cinnamon bear. The bear was hardly more than a cub, and was carrying off one of the kids. The goat, horns down, was fighting viciously, though weak from loss of blood.

It would be interesting to know

## 138 The Master-Knot

what one wild animal thinks when another wild animal, from its point of view, comes to the rescue. Adam carried a lariat over one arm. In an instant it flew through the air, dropping over Bruin's shoulders. He released the kid, and tumbled backward over the cliff, as much with surprise as by the force of the jerk on the rope, taking that treasured article with him.

It took some time to capture the wounded animals, bind up their hurts, and get them down the pathway leading to the beach. For there was a beach, the best one they had found on the Eastern coast, and as they put the goat and her kids down in the grass, Adam said tentatively, "If you are not afraid, I can go home and get the horses and the sleds. It isn't a great way, and I believe I can

## The Master-Knot 139

be back in three hours,—I'm sure I can if the beach goes as close to our park as I think."

Robin acquiesced, and as soon as he was gone began gathering drift-wood. When she had quite a little heap she made a fire with the coals they carried in the pot. It is doubtless more romantic to build a fire by striking flint rocks together, but a pot of coals has its uses in a matchless universe. Then she found a long, stout club, and put one end in the fire, where it smouldered sullenly.

"There now," she said conclusively, "if my bear acquaintance calls, I will present him with 'the red flower.' I didn't learn the 'Jungle Books' by heart for nothing."

Meanwhile Adam was striding over the beach at a rate that brought him to the little cove and the high wall of

## 140 The Master-Knot

rocks that shut them in on the south in a little over an hour. Two of the pups had gone with him, and they raced on ahead, as he came in sight of the house. Everything seemed to have an air of welcome, and the horses whinnied joyfully when he called them from the gateway.

The pathetic placard was still there, and he crumpled it in his hand, and went in and opened the windows. He milked one of the cows, and gathering some green stuff in the garden started back with the team and the sleds. Once down the steep decline, and over the rocks at the south, they went on rapidly.

Although he had wasted no time, it was past one o'clock when he saw her familiar figure afar off. She hurried to meet him. They had not been separated so long before that year, and

## The Master-Knot 141

realized the unconscious strain in the sudden revulsion. They said nothing of this, however, though they clasped hands for a moment. Then Robin spoke to the horses, and stroked their necks, as they bent their heads and rubbed against her affectionately.

She had spread their table on a broad, flat rock, but before they had their own meal, she warmed some of the milk, and they gave the kids their first lesson in drinking out of a bucket. Afterward it took but a few moments to strike camp. The burros were already packed, and the goat with her kids, all hobbled, were placed in the sled, and the cavalcade started on its way.





## X

*Cling to thy home! If there the meanest  
shed*

*Yield thee a hearth and a shelter for thy head,  
And some poor plot, with vegetables stored,  
Be all that Heaven allots thee for thy board,  
Unsavory bread, and herbs that scatter'd  
grow*

*Wild on the river-brink, or mountain-brow;  
Yet e'en this cheerless mansion shall provide  
More heart's repose than all the world beside.*

*LEONIDAS.*



“**D**O you know, Adam,” said Robin, when they had walked a mile in silence, “do you know that you are a fraud?”

“Well, yes,” he responded, “but I didn’t know you knew it. Is the discovery recent?”

“Never mind about dates, but tell me why you didn’t use the rifle instead of the lariat? What did you take it for?”

“I took it for your peace of mind. I didn’t use it for several good and substantial and sentimental reasons. To reverse them, this last year I have grown to understand your horror of killing things. We have done very well without sacrificing any of our dependents; in fact, it would seem

## 146    The Master-Knot

like murder to slaughter the animals about us. And it's such a little world it seems a pity to kill off any of its inhabitants. To tell the truth, I hope the bear got away all right. This is maudlin, I know, but I don't want my hand first to bring death on all there is left of earth. Incidentally, — there are no cartridges."

He stopped the horses, while Robin readjusted the kids to make them more comfortable, and took the lame one in her arms, then they moved on.

Presently she said, "I am so glad of these kids!"

There was so much enthusiasm in her voice that Adam laughed and asked why, and she answered: —

"Like you, I have sound and sentimental reasons. The sound one is that we shall need their fleece unless, — why, goodness gracious, Adam, there

is a baking-powder can of flax in the dresser, and I never thought till this moment that we can plant it."

"True," answered Adam, "but given flax or fleece, what would you do with it?"

"Spin it," she answered sententiously. "Of course you think I can't, but it happens that I once lived, when I was a little girl, very near to an old woman. I don't refer to her age, but her ideas. She carded and spun and wove and dyed all the family clothing. She made her own soap and would n't have a stove in the house. She had eight children, too, and they all of them turned out badly. I used to go there off and on; I think she looked on me as a kind of sinful amusement. Anyhow, she told me the world was going to ruin, and the women were poor 'doless' creatures, who could n't

## 148      The Master-Knot

spin a hank of yarn, or gin a pound of cotton, or heel a sock. She shook her head over me when she found I could n't knit, but she set a garter for me at once, and during the seven or eight years that I went by her door on my way to school she taught me all those marvelous accomplishments. I daresay I have forgotten them."

"What are the sentimental reasons?" asked Adam.

She looked at the kid as it nestled against her shoulder.

"I have a fancy," she said, "that Nannette and her children are going to minister to a mind diseased, and help pluck a rooted sorrow from the brain. The world was getting too healthy. Has it ever struck you that we have neither of us been sick for a day this year? I have had to mother the chickens, but there has been no

suffering. I'm not glad to have pain come into the world, but it is good to be able to alleviate it. We will put Nannette in a sling till her leg has a chance to set, and by the time it is well she won't want to leave us. As for the kids, I expect they will be like the plague of frogs, and we shall find them in our beds and our ovens and our kneading troughs. Oh, Adam, there is the house! Doesn't it look dear and homey?"

She put the kid back on the sled, and ran on, pointing out this and that, the growth of the corn, the afternoon radiance, till they reached their doorway. Then there were a thousand things to do. First Nannette was made comfortable in the stable; then the chickens were summoned to a meal of yellow corn, and when Lassie drove the cows into the barnyard, each

## 150 The Master-Knot

was congratulated in turn upon her calf, and those interesting, if wobbly, bovine infants were carefully inspected. After supper they sat down before the fire, very tired, but the nearest happy they had been in a year. The dogs were lying about them, and the thump, thump of first one tail and then another told the story of canine content, while the kittens walked over them impartially.

“What a strange thing human nature is!” Adam said. “The only thing needed to make our life perfect is that it shall not last. The moment, if that moment ever comes, when it is real no more, it will become ideal.”

“I know,” she said dreamily. “Things in the world used to be too good to be true. This must cease to be, to be good at all.”



## XI

*Yet if Hope has flown away  
In a night, or in a day,  
In a vision, or in none,  
Is it therefore the less gone?  
All that we see or seem  
Is but a dream within a dream.*

POE.



“IT is the first of May,” said Adam. “It is a year ago to-day. Shall we pass the gateway?”

“Not now,” answered Robin. “Wait till afternoon. I am so busy this morning.”

She was sitting at the table teaching half a dozen little chickens to appreciate hard-boiled egg. The wounded kid was lying in her lap, one arm was about it, and an adventurous kitten looked over her shoulder. As she tapped on the board with one slender forefinger, the chickens, hearing their mother’s bill, began picking up the fragments of egg. She had rounded out wonderfully in a year, and Adam realized for the first time that she was a very beautiful woman.

## 154 The Master-Knot

“Suppose,” she went on, “you begin your book to-day. Write your description of a year ago. It will never be so plain again. There is plenty of time before we go. Besides, if it is a dream, we shall want the written record to show what dreams may come.”

Adam hesitated a moment, then went to his desk. She had said truly, the events of that day would never again be so clear, and as he began to record them they marshaled themselves before him, until he found himself writing with a dramatic power that fascinated and amazed him.

It must have been some time afterward that Robin stole in and set a glass of milk, some biscuit and strawberries, down on the desk beside him and then went out, taking the dogs with her. He did not notice

another sound until she called him to supper.

While he did the evening work Robin dressed herself in the garments she had worn the year before. As soon as she could make others she had put them aside, awaiting the awakening or the rescue.

The heavy cloth skirt and the silk waist were put on with a strange reluctance. Years ago the old doctor in "The Guardian Angel" said our china became our tombstones, but surely our garments may become the graveyards of our emotions, and hold sharp or sweet remembrances long after they are past wearing. In spite of some tan Robin found the face that looked back at her from her mirror infinitely more attractive than it had been the year before.

Adam started a little when he saw

## 156 The Master-Knot

her. Then he drew her hand through his arm, and they went to the gateway. As he opened the gate she turned and looked back. The sun was behind the mountains, and the shadows were long and dark. They heard the sounds of the various creatures settling into quiet for the night, and Adam sent back all the dogs but Lassie. They went slowly and wistfully. Robin stooped and kissed Prince on his white forehead. As Adam closed the gate, she said half fearfully, "Shall we ever see them again?" But he did not answer. He took her hand and led her to the boulder.

Far as the eye could reach they saw what they expected to see. Half a mile away the sea rolled in on a tolerably level beach; here it thundered and roared against a sheer cliff. Among the rocks they could see the

nests of many wild-fowl, and gulls flew by them. They sat down on the rock and waited until midnight. Then they went home. The dogs received them obstreperously, and the kid from its corner bleated faintly. Robin bent over it anxiously, then warmed some milk and fed it. When Adam came in with some fresh water she was swinging slowly to and fro in the rocker, singing softly an absurd nursery song: —

“Sleep, baby, sleep.

The stars they are the sheep;

The big moon is the shepherdess;

The little stars are the lambs, I guess.

Sleep, baby, sleep.”

“It needed to be cuddled,” she said in as matter-of-fact a voice as if all lambs were sung to sleep regularly. “You know dear old Professor Carter said there would have been no wild

## 158 The Master-Knot

animals if we had n't made them so ; but now, if you will, you can put her with Nannie."

When he came back she had gone into her room. There was nothing more for either of them to say. There was nothing to do, except to hope for a sail, since they no longer hoped for an awakening.



## XII

*Speech is but broken light upon the depth  
Of the unspoken.*

GEORGE ELIOT.



**T**HE work on the book progressed rather slowly. Often Adam had to refer to Robin when his memory was at fault. At first she had gone away, to leave him alone with his work, but as he referred to her more frequently, she sat with him, sewing while he wrote, a frame of morning-glories back of her, or reading with the keen enjoyment of one who renews a pleasure long foregone. When he seemed to be going on smoothly, she sometimes stole away and gave herself up to long hours with her violin.

One afternoon she tapped on his casement. His work was lagging, and he rose gladly and went out with her. They walked up the path and through

## 162 The Master-Knot

the gateway to their boulder, and sat down.

“Talk to me,” said Adam.

She shook her head. “About what, most worshipful seigneur? For I am but a worm of the dust before thee, and all my tales are of the homely tasks of baking and brewing. Naught is there worthy to be set down in thy book.” Then, with a sudden change of manner, “Oh, Adam, there are eighteen new chickens to-day! The Plymouth Rock hen stole a nest, and they came off this morning. And there is some news too. The flax is in bloom. It is so pretty.”

“When do you expect to weave your first linen?” asked Adam.

“Oh, I don’t know, but it is good to know there will be some to weave. Do you remember Andersen’s story of the flax? I was thinking of it this

morning as I pulled out some weeds, and how when it was pulled up and cut and hackled, it said: 'One cannot always have good times. One must make one's experience, and so one comes to know something;' and when it is woven and cut up and made into garments, it still says, 'If I have suffered something, I have been made into something. I am happiest of all. That is a real blessing. Now I shall be of some use in the world, and that is right, that is a true pleasure.' "

"If one only knew he was to be of some use," Adam said wearily; "if we could see the justification of our suffering."

"Then we should be as gods," answered Robin. "I like the song of the flax, 'content, content;' and when the linen is worn out, it is again tortured and beaten until it becomes paper

## 164 The Master-Knot

whereon an eternal word is written. I used to wonder why Andersen was given to children; not that I wouldn't have them read him, but he is one of the profound thinkers of the world. No one had Andersen clubs, or professed to find deep and wonderful esoteric truths in his stories, but they are there. Do you remember my girls' club down on — I don't think there were any streets, but the inhabitants called the place 'Kerry Patch'?"

"Why, no," said Adam, "I didn't know you had one; why didn't you tell me?"

"That was ever so long ago, ages and ages, — when you came to see —" She paused a little, and then spoke the personal pronoun that tells the whole story, for a woman can say "him" in such a way as to betray unspeakable heights of adoration or

abysses of loathing. She went on slowly. "You were not one of my friends then; how could you be, if there existed anything in common between you two? That sounds dreadful, but you know all about it so well that subterfuges are useless."

"To tell the truth, I never cared anything about him at all," Adam answered quickly. "Like a good many others, I was enthusiastic over your voice. He asked me to the house to hear you sing, and I went, and was glad of the chance. And you have never sung for me once this year."

"You never asked me," she answered. "'A dumb priest loses his benefice.' But I was speaking of my club. We studied Andersen all winter, and got enough more out of him than a lot of us who pored over Ibsen, guided by a literary expert. Andersen

## 166    The Master-Knot

has a more beautiful, a more inspiring philosophy. Every nation has its story of Psyche, the lost soul of things, but none is more beautiful than the tale of Gerda and Kay. There were children in that club who were cruel, horribly cruel, and one day when we gave an entertainment for them, one of the older girls recited the story of 'The Daisy and the Lark.' They cried as I had cried over it years before."

"I remember," he said. "It broke my heart when I was a little shaver. I could n't give so sad a story as that to a child."

"Oh, yes, you could," she said, "if the child needed it. The world was cruel, cruel, Adam; I used to wonder sometimes why God did not blot it all out, as He has blotted it out now. Once in another club, a big, swell affair, there was a Humane Society



programme. One woman, in a Persian lamb jacket, spoke on the evils of the overcheck; you know how they get that wool? And women nodded the aigrettes in their bonnets, torn from the old birds while the little ones starved to death, to show their approval, and patted their hands gloved in the skins of kids, sewed in cloth soon after their birth so they could n't grow a fleece, and tortured all their short lives, and went home to eat pâté-de-foie gras, and broil live lobsters, thanking God they were not as the rest of men, if only they let out their check-reins a hole or so. It was horrible, — the cruelties men practised to gratify appetite, and that women were guilty of for vanity. I suppose I am a monomaniac on the subject, but we never seemed far removed from barbarians, when we went clothed in the skins of

wild animals, and decorated with their heads and tails and feathers, like so many Sioux chiefs. The varnish of civilization is n't dry on us yet. Why, if a ship should come here now, do you know what they would do first, unless they happened to be East Indians? They would say they wanted some fresh meat, and offer to buy Lily; she is the fattest of the cows. If we would n't sell her, they would probably take her anyway."

"Kill Lily," cried Adam, angrily. "They'd have me to kill first; nothing on this place is going to be slaughtered while I can protect it." He went on more slowly, a little ashamed of his heat, "I feel a sense of kinship with all these creatures that would make it impossible to kill them. It's like the woman whose Newfoundland died, and a friend asked

if she was going to have him stuffed. 'Stuffed!' she said; 'I'd as soon think of stuffing my husband!'"

Robin laughed, and leaning over tweaked Lassie's ear. "If we are to be stuffed, we prefer to have it an ante-mortem performance, don't we, little dog?"

The sun dropped behind the tall peaks, but its dying light still covered sea and shore. They rose as if for the benediction, and looked out at the waters before them. Then they looked at each other and grew white to the lips, and Robin knelt down and flinging her arms around Lassie sobbed and laughed. Adam never took his eyes from the coming ship.



### XIII

*Every ship brings a word;  
Well for those who have no fear,  
Looking seaward well assured  
That the word the vessel brings  
Is the word they wish to hear.*

EMERSON.



**T**HE ship bore steadily toward them, but night was coming on so rapidly that her lines were obscured. They could not even tell whether it was a sailing vessel or propelled by steam.

“There’s one thing certain,” said Adam, excitedly: “it was coming this way, but very slowly. I suppose that is to be expected of a ship sailing unknown waters. They have nothing to go by, though they know, of course, just what part of the round globe they are on.”

She answered almost apathetically, as if she found it difficult to talk, “It seems as if good sailors would lay by at night, when they do not know their course, and there is land in sight, — land that has never been explored.”

## 174 The Master Knot

“It does seem strange she should come right on,” he assented. “For surely no ship has ever sailed these seas before. Perhaps —”

“Perhaps what?”

“Perhaps she has been clear around; perhaps this is the only bit of land left above a world ocean.”

Robin shivered a little, and Adam turned toward the beacon, that had glowed in vain for a year. It had been built on a high, altar-shaped rock, across the gorge, where it could be kept up without leaving the park. Robin went with him, and they gathered a pile of timber that insured the brilliancy of their signal until morning. Adam piled on the logs till the blaze leaped far up in the darkness; then they went back to the boulder and sat down to think and wait.

“See how the wind is rising,” said



## The Master-Knot 175

Robin, breaking a silence of an hour, during which even Lassie had been motionless.

“But it is toward land,” answered Adam.

“But the same wind that brings us the ship may dash it to pieces on this awful coast.”

“True, but she is far enough out to make herself secure. Oh, Robin, suppose she sails around us and goes on!”

“That is impossible,” answered Robin. “The people on that ship are as anxious to find us as we can be to see them, if they are civilized at all. Noah and Mt. Ararat are not to be named in the same day with us.”

Adam crossed the gorge and added fuel to the fire. For a time the wind increased in velocity until a stiff gale was blowing, then, as the small hours

## 176 The Master-Knot

came on, it waned, and the beacon flared straight up once more.

“I wonder where’s she from?” said Adam.

“I wonder where she is now,” answered Robin.

“I feel sure,” he said, “when morning comes we shall see her riding the waves out there; and think of it, Robin, we can go!”

Robin made no reply, and her very silence made Adam repeat, but as a self-addressed question, “Go where? Yes,” he went on quickly, “go where, Robin. Suppose the ship is all right, and that she stops, and the crew are not pirates, and are willing to take us aboard, where are we to go? Is there any place on earth that can mean as much to us as this island? Suppose Asia, or Africa, or Europe are still in existence, we should not regain our

friends and relatives, and life would be harder with strange people, under a strange government, far more so than we have found it here, even without so many of its luxuries.”

Robin shook her head sadly. “At first, Adam. We should learn their language and their customs. New friends are speedily acquired, and as for relatives, — well, in the scheme of life relatives don’t count for much. There always comes a time when they step out of our lives, anyway.”

“But as to happiness?”

Her face paled a little. “Have you been happy here?” she asked, without raising her eyes to his, and then went on, not waiting for a reply, “If you have been, it has been in the care of our little family of dependents, who do not need you half so much as the great family of human dependents.

## 178 The Master-Knot

Rest assured if there is a continent over there across the darkness, it is peopled with beings who need the devoted and unselfish labors of such a man as you. You would find your work easily enough,—the work you have been saved for, the work you must do.”

“But if there is no continent left?” he queried.

“In that case there must be islands; there were many mountains higher than these, and they are peopled, no doubt. Shall we not go to these other orphans, deserted by Mother Earth, our brothers and sisters, through our common calamity?”

Both were silent, engrossed in their own thoughts. A return to the world meant going back to the uncivilized rush of civilization. It meant the eternal question of what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and where-

withal shall we be clothed? It meant the old competition, the stern old law of the survival of the brawniest. Above all, to Robin, it meant separation from Adam, for once more in Rome, the customs of Rome must be followed. To do Adam justice, this was a contingency which did not enter his mind. As he had said before, whatever had put them in this dream together would keep them there, so that when he thought of relinquishing all the comfort and ease and quiet of his present life, all the loving animals, the cosy little house, the tiny fields, the blooming garden, it never occurred to him that he must relinquish more than all these things, more than the peace and harmony, that which, unconsciously, had come to be the very guiding star of his life.

“I wonder if whoever is left cares

## 180 The Master-Knot

for grand opera?" said Robin, rather grimly.

"Why?" asked Adam in so startled a voice that she laughed hysterically.

"It's the only thing I know well enough to make a living at it," she said laconically. "I think the fire needs some more wood, Adam."

As he replenished it, her words burned themselves upon his brain, and he realized in an instant that a return to the old world meant giving up this supreme friend, all that he had left in the world, all there was for him in any world. The thing was impossible. He turned to go back to her, some kind of an impetuous avowal on his lips, but she had left the boulder and walked down almost to the edge of a precipitous cliff which they had called "Lover's Leap," in a spirit of badinage.

## The Master-Knot 181

She stood there quietly, watching the gray dawn, and his heart impelled him to go to her and take her in his arms. As his love revealed itself to him in all its power, it seemed impossible that he should know it now for the first time. Why, why, had he been so blind? If the ship took them away —

He walked unsteadily down to her, resolved to say nothing. If she wanted to go, her wish should be sufficient.

The dawn came slowly, but it came at last. As the darkness lifted, a slight fog settled over the face of the waters. Instinctively they recalled that other night when they had watched through the mist and his hand closed over hers. The sun was well up before the east wind dissipated it, and left only the dancing waves, brilliantly blue, stretching away into the dawn. On all that

## 182    The Master-Knot

broad expanse there was not so much as a cockle-shell afloat.

Robin turned and looked to right and left in bewilderment, and then at Adam.

His chest was heaving, and as his eyes searched her face he cried, "Thank God," and gathered her up in his arms. She nestled there without a word.

They crossed the gorge and scattered the brands of their watch-fire, and walked on down to the cove. Suddenly Lassie came bounding toward them uttering short, excited barks. They quickened their pace, and as they came in sight of the beach discovered the object of her alarm. Against a small promontory, lying on one side, was the ship they had sighted the evening before. It was a hopeless wreck, and had borne to them no liv-



## The Master-Knot 183

ing thing. Yet it had served its purpose. It had revealed their love for each other, and told them that they had hoped against a second deluge in vain.



*XIV*

*The truth of truths is love.*

*BAILEY.*



**A**S Adam went about his morning's work he was filled with a sense of gladness, an exaltation of life he had never known before. He stretched out his arms, as if to let all the glory of the earth meet the profounder splendor of his soul. As he walked down the garden path he looked with affection at the flowers they had planted together. But for the absurdity of it, he could have woven a chaplet of them and worn it. But the world had reached that height of civilization where the symbol of the glad and living thing was too emotional; always and everywhere we preferred the dead thing, the skin of the seal, the shroud of the silkworm, the straw that was left after the

## 188 The Master-Knot

flowers were gone; and Adam was still civilized.

He accepted his happiness without a question. It was too real, too keen, too great a revelation for him to stop to analyze it. He knew it in every pulsation of his heart, in every imagination of his mind, and with the quickened senses of the lover he perceived that Robin's feelings differed from his own. For a year he had been lost in introspection; now they seemed to have changed places, and she grew silent and almost reserved.

"What is it, dear?" he said. "No, don't try to evade an answer. We must not stop being frank with each other now."

She did not reply at once, and when she did her voice was so low that he had to stoop to catch the words. "Do you think you do love me as fully as

you might have loved some one else, younger and happier than I, better fitted to you? It doesn't seem as if you could; you never did in the old days, you never even thought of it."

Adam laughed lightly. "I beg of you spare me, for this isn't 'so sudden' at all." Then seeing that her mood forbade jest, he went on seriously: "Really, I mean it. It's true I never made you pretty speeches in the old days, nor stopped to consider whether I might have done so had things been different; but then I never made pretty speeches to any one. From the very beginning I have taken you as a matter of course. It always seemed as if we had known each other from the very first. You entered into my plans as if you had known them as you might if we had gone to the same little red schoolhouse. I wish we had!

190     The Master-Knot

I'm jealous of the years when I did n't know you."

"But a whole year," she said doubtfully. "Are you sure it is n't just loneliness and propinquity?"

Adam kissed her fingers one at a time. "You are going to beg my pardon for that some day," he said. "You are not very vain, my sweetheart; how could I help loving you?"

"That's just what I am finding fault with," she said with a sudden twinkle of fun in her eyes. "You have managed to keep from it so long. But seriously, I am not the kind of a woman I should have fancied you would care for. I am, at least I was, very weary of life; I knew too much about it. And I am older than you."

He looked at her critically. "You were, a year ago," he answered; "I don't know how much, two or three years—"



“Five,” she said.

“Well, five; but this last year you have been growing young. The very fact that you were tired of the old life made it less of a strain for you to give it up. The tired look is all gone, even from your eyes, whereas lots of gray has come into my hair. You had learned to live in yourself and your music. My whole scheme of life was wrapped up in the social existence of our time. In a way I lost more than you did. I have learned a good deal this past year. Five years ago, if I had loved you, there would have been many inequalities between us that do not exist today. Now it seems to me we are as absolutely mated, as much parts of one whole as the two halves of the brain, or the right and left ventricles of our hearts. It is no disparagement of you or of myself to say that no boy could

## 192     The Master-Knot

appreciate you. The measure of a man's manhood is his ability to understand the highest type of womanhood. As to your being worldly, that's all nonsense." He stroked her hair a few minutes in silence, and then said, half quizzically, "You might question me, if I said it, but this is what Balzac said of women like you: 'A woman who has received a man's education possesses a faculty which is the most fertile in happiness for herself and her husband; but that woman is as rare as happiness itself.'"

She looked pleased, but she did not reply, and he went on.

"Do you still doubt me? Well, then, know that I have loved you from the very beginning, for love, when it comes, is a retroactive law of our being. If I had loved you less, if you had seemed less a part of me, I might have realized it sooner."

## The Master-Knot 193

She shook her head. "I have known that I loved you for a long time, months," she said.

"Then you ought to have known I loved you," he answered quickly. "Don't you think it is possible to love with our souls, our subconsciousness, and realize with our slow brains, after months and years, what our hearts knew at once? Even love has become more or less of a mental process. We reason about things instead of feeling them, and yet when we come to our last analyses we don't *know* anything; we simply feel. When the scientist says, 'The amœba moves out of the shade into the sunlight because it wants the sunlight,' he bases his postulate upon what he feels, and believes that the atom feels. This is all that he knows. We do not seek warmth because we have calculated its effects

## 194 The Master-Knot

upon us, but because we feel cold. Oh, we have starved our feelings to feed our brains, until the mind believes it is the immortal part of us, instead of realizing that what we know, we are merely re-discovering, while what we feel is our apperception of the infinite. If we had the courage to be true to our feelings, instead of our thoughts, I believe it would be a better, as it would certainly be a truer, world."

"Do you really think more people are guided by thought than by feeling?" she asked with a good deal of surprise.

"Perhaps not in one sense," he answered. "A great many people are carried along by their impulses, their transitory emotions, which are not, properly speaking, feelings at all. They make what some one calls the 'fatal

## The Master-Knot 195

error of mistaking the eddy for the current.' But among educated people it seems to me that we think too much, especially of our own thoughts, and feel too little. All this year I have not said that I loved you; I don't know that I have thought it, but I have felt and lived it. Sometimes I have not been thoughtful —"

"You have always been too thoughtful," she interrupted.

"No, but when I have been inconsiderate it was because you were myself, the best self that we overlook sometimes, but return to with unfailing loyalty. You were not bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; that is a very low and material view of what you have been and are to me, heart of my heart and soul of my soul. I cannot think of a life apart from you, for you are my life. Marriage

## 196 The Master-Knot

is not a matter of a license and a ceremony and Mendelssohn and gaping crowds and a tour. We do not need any one to tell us that what God has joined cannot be sundered by man. All this year has been a long wedding of every thought and feeling and desire, until I have looked into your eyes to see my own wish. We have thought and thought, but that way madness lies. Now I feel that all the world we have lost, lives for us in every glorious possibility in each other. For I know that you love me."

"Yes," she said, "I think I have loved you all along, but it never entered my dreams that you could love me. Even now, when you tell me, it does not seem as if it could be so, either by the mental process, or by that of feeling."

He caught her in his arms and

## The Master-Knot 197

kissed her, a kiss so long and tender that it left her clinging to him, breathless and half awakened.

“Don’t think,” he said, “feel, — feel my heart and know that every beat is for you, that every atom of me calls for you, and every drop of blood obeys, as it would command you. I have tried to reach the ideal of the love that says, not ‘thou must be mine,’ but ‘I must be thine,’ but I have failed if you can doubt me.”

She flung her arms around his neck with sudden passion.

“This is the greatest, the most perfect dream of all,” she said; “I think it must be heaven.”

“A new heaven and a new earth,” he answered gently.





XV

*Women alone know how much attraction there is in the respect which a master shows them.*

*BALZAC.*



**T**HE derelict did not afford them much amusement or information. The waves soon beat her to pieces on the savage rocks. Apparently she had been a ship plying between Western ports, probably San Francisco and Honolulu. In the wreckage washed up there were a few pounds of rice, and some brooms of what they believed to be sugar-cane. There was nothing else.

“Not even a lemon!” Robin said disconsolately. “Think of living all one’s natural life not only ten, but ten thousand miles from a lemon.”

Adam laughed sympathetically. “It’s like a yachting party I remem-

ber ; we found that the boat we had engaged had been taken by somebody else, and our set had to be divided. Later in the evening we discovered that we had all the sugar and the other crowd all the lemons. ‘ ’T was ever thus from childhood’s hour, I’ve seen my fondest hopes decay : I never wanted something sour, but what molasses came my way.’ Never mind, dear. We will go and plant our sugar, and by the time it is ready to sweeten anything, a whole cargo of lemons may have floated into harbor right at our door.”

They crossed the ranges to the western coast, where there was lower ground, better fitted to the supposed requirements of rice and cane, and had a good deal of amusement out of their ignorance, neither of them having more than a misty idea about either

## The Master-Knot 203

rice or sugar before they reach the stage to be served together.

It was quite late when they were through and camped for supper. Remembering their trip of a few weeks previous, that now seemed so long ago, Adam said, "Are you too tired to sing, dear? It is so long since I have heard you."

She stood up and thought for a moment, and then putting back her loosened hair began with Bourdillon's "The night has a thousand eyes," and sang on and on. At last, turning to Adam with a little fond gesture, and altering the words slightly, she sang :

"Like a laverlock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride!  
All the world was Adam once, with Eve by his  
side.

What's the world, my lad, my love? What can  
it do?

I am thine, and thou art mine; life is sweet and  
new.

## 204 The Master-Knot

If the world have missed the mark, let it stand  
by,  
For we two have gotten leave, and once more  
we'll try."

"Once more," Adam repeated.  
"Once more, my darling! Oh, life  
is sweet and new for us; we can afford  
to lose the world! When will you  
come to me, love, when?"

She shook her head with a little  
wilful laugh, and all the glistening  
glory of her hair fell about her like a  
wedding veil.

"Wait," she said; "wait a little.  
The flax is not nearly ready for spin-  
ning yet; can a bride forget her  
attire? Besides, how can we be—"  
she paused, and let her silence fill the  
gap, "when I know we neither of us  
know any ceremony more dignified  
than hopping over a broomstick?"

They started homeward, walking

slowly through the dimly lighted mountain gorges, talking the ineffable nonsense that lovers never weary of. As they came to a brook that rushed noisily down the ravine, Adam stepped across, and held out his hand to her.

“Wait a moment,” he said, “just where you are, dear, and say this with me:—

“Over running water: my love I give to you, my life I pledge to you, my heart I take not back from you while this water runs.

“Over running water: every seventh year, at this time of the year, at this hour of the night, I will meet you here to renew my troth; death alone to relieve me of this vow.’”

“Is that all?” she asked wonderingly. “Over running water, while this water runs, while there is any snow in the mountains, or rivers upon

land, or waters in the seas, or clouds in the skies, when the world is old, and the sun burned out, and time grows weary, I shall love you still, always and forever. What is it all about, love?"

He clasped her close, and did not answer at once. "Don't you know that old Irish troth," he said, "which would have been enough, even in that hard, unromantic world of ours, to have made you legally my wife, if said over any Scottish stream? I thought you knew; you are sure I would not trick you? You know I could not?" He put her head back on his shoulder and looked into her shining eyes. It seemed to him he could not bear even a look of reproach. She raised her hands almost as if she were placing an invisible crown upon his head, and let her arms fall about his shoulders.



The Master-Knot 207

“Then I am your wife while living water runs?”

“Forever and forever,” he replied.

“Oh, wait, wait just a little,” she answered.



## XVI

*All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust, and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great Master, Author, and Founder of society.*

BURKE.



**A**DAM found a note beside his plate in the morning. "I will be back before five o'clock," it said; "I must think." He did not sit down to the table she had spread for him, but called the dogs; Prince was missing, and this was a relief to him. Nothing could happen to her when Prince was with her. His first impulse was to follow her, but he repelled it, and he too sat down to think. Lassie whined uneasily, and he stroked her head absent-mindedly, and finally went out and tried to work. The hours dragged away, and by four o'clock he could stand it no longer. He went to the gateway. As he unfastened it, he saw her coming toward him, but she

## 212 The Master-Knot

stopped and he joined her, and together they turned back to the boulder. He noticed that she was very white, and that her eyes looked as if she had not slept, but he only said, "Have you thought?"

"Yes," she answered, "I have thought."

"And decided?"

"No," she said wearily; "we must decide together. We are not children, Adam, nor are we in any way the prototypes of those first parents of ours. I think sometimes that ever since their day their children have been walking in a blind circle, eating not the fruit of knowledge, but of the knowledge of good and evil. And what do we know, you and I, after all these years? Are you sure what we ought to do? It is as if God had taken us into a conspiracy to renew the old, or create

a new, scheme of existence. Possibly we are being tried, tested, to prove whether or not we have learned our lesson. We must be brave enough to think, not what is our will, but what is our duty. Think of the awful responsibility, whichever way we choose."

"I can't," said Adam. "I can't think of anything but you."

"Nor I of aught but you," she said, moving away, "when you hold me so. But we *must* think."

"I have," answered Adam, gravely. "All my life I have thought. I have wanted the perfect companionship of the one woman in all the world who could give it; I have always known she would come. I have wanted a home; I have wanted to see my sons and daughters grow up about me. I wanted to be a power for good in this world of which we are a part, and

## 214    The Master-Knot

where we live for some good purpose, if there be any purpose in life. I have so conducted myself that I can look a good woman in the face, and offer her my life, for whatever it is worth, without damning recollections to come between us. My children will have a clean heritage of blood and name. The family tree was scoffed at in America, but, thank God, mine was an oak that had weathered many a gale. Not very great folk, but honest, upright, fearless men and women, true to their king or their country and their faiths; true to their ideals, too, when their fellows were content with realities only. Any man who gives his children such a heritage as that can say with more truth than Napoleon said to his soldiers, 'Fifty centuries look down upon you.' I wanted to make the world a little better for my life, and I



wanted my children brought up to feel that their lives belonged first to their country, to live or die for her."

"I know," said Robin, softly; "I used to think I would drape the flag over my baby's cradle, and embroider it on his pinning blanket."

"We are probably a pair of sentimental fools," he went on, "but I believe in sentiment. A man could not say this out loud because sentiment was supposed to be essentially womanish. How those old distinctions weary one, with their scientific data to prove that men surpass women in the senses of feeling and taste, while women have better sight and hearing, and so on through every conceivable maundering of the human brain, forever harping on differences and accentuating them, forever dwelling on sex distinctions and never on a common humanity."

## 216 The Master-Knot

“It was a dreadfully scientific age,” she assented, “a generation fearfully and wonderfully given over to statistics; and yet how many dreamers there were!”

“Yes, but in the twentieth century a young man dreamed dreams and saw visions at his own risk. While he dreamed of the brotherhood of man, his classmate with the corporation practice distanced him in the pursuit of position. While he led himself through the valley of the shadow of temptation, and feared no evil because of the Madonna vision in his soul, even the Madonnas preferred Lancelot and Tristram to Galahad. It was n't an easy world for a man who wanted to keep faith with himself. It was a pinchbeck world, of pretence and pull, — that world that lies drowned out there. And yet I believe it was infi-

nately better than the lost Atlantis, better than the deluged planet of Noah, nobler and finer than the best civilization of which we have any trace. I never despaired of it, and yet as I grew older I wondered if I was not foolish and mistaken in daring to hope and to dream."

"I know," she said again. "I think I did despair, for it seemed to me a dreadful, a terrible world. I used to wonder how conscientious men and women could bring other human beings into it, to be and to suffer and to faint in the frantic struggle for the unrealities that made us miserable or happy. Consider how paltry they were. If we built a new house, we were infinitely more concerned to see that the contractor used pressed brick than we were to see that the construction of our own characters was true.

## 218      The Master-Knot

When we grew wealthy we moved into houses of more stories; but how often did we say: 'Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul'? I had as clean and strong a heritage as you, but a different one. It is no use to comfort oneself with nice little aphorisms about the needle's eye, and saws about filthy lucre, and telling God's estimate of money from the kind of people He gives it to; I tell you biting poverty is a terrible thing, an unspeakable thing. It is a misfortune for a child to grow up under a sense of injustice. I used to have times of revolt against it all, when I hated with the blind, ferocious hate of a child, and I saw what David never saw, — the righteous forsaken, and his seed begging, not bread, but a chance to earn his bread, and begging for it without being able to make just terms.

I saw my home sold under the sheriff's hammer, and my parents struggle all their lives because of the lack of money, when they had everything else, nobility, character, truth, and education. My girlhood was a long series of going-withouts. Finally I married a man who promised me everything. Ah, well, when has the Apple of Sodom failed to deceive the eye and undeceive the tongue? At least he did care for my voice, and through that I learned that all those years I had carried in my own throat the golden notes to have altered everything, and I sang a little gladness into my parents' lives before they ended, thank God."

"How did you come to sing in opera? Do not tell me if the recollection is unpleasant. I wondered then."

"Because after — after things went wrong, I could not take his money.

## 220 The Master-Knot

I knew how to sing, and I loved it; but even there it was the same story of suspicion and jealousy, till it seemed to me that hate and fear ruled the world. I went to so many, many cities, but there was no city beautiful, and in all the country I found no Arcady. I had money then, it is true; but the jingle of the guinea does n't help the artist who sings, or paints, or writes, or plays, because God has put it into his soul to do this thing; at least not after the very first, when it stands as a tangible assurance of success. The cities were 'cities of dreadful night,' and awful days; there were places that were not hives; but styes of human beings, fighting for what they called life, to die, never having lived. Sometimes I went into those jungles of civilization and sang to them. It was the only thing I could give them

all. It was there I got my lesson. I had been singing 'All Tears,' when an old woman said in her feeble, trembling voice, 'Ye mun loe us, young leddy, to come to sic a place an' sing o' Him wha sa loed the warld that He sent His only begotten Son ta it, for it's only great loe that casts out fear, and this is a fearsome spot.' Since then I have n't hated anything, except wanton cruelty, and I know love rules when it is fearless, but that is very seldom. We were afraid to say, I love you, to anything more sensitive than a stray kitten, though the world has hungered and thirsted after the love we have feared to give even to our own children. And yet just the love a man and woman may bear each other, unconsciously, is enough to transform the earth. We have not been cross to each other; I do not

222      The Master-Knot

believe we have spoken unkindly to anything this year.”

He drew her into his arms. “Is it enough to regenerate the earth?”

“And keep it regenerated?” she echoed. “Do you know?”

“Do you remember telling me, long ago, of a story in which the woman said she had never seen but one man whose mother she would be willing to be? And you said you felt so about me? I was very proud of it then, but I am prouder of it now, since, feeling so, you cannot be unwilling to be the mother of my children. You are not, are you?”

She nestled a little closer to him, and put her hand about his neck. He stooped and kissed it, and repeated his question.

“Unwilling? No; how could I be? I never dreaded maternity except



when — and that lasted such a little while. I do not dread it now. It seems to me it would be a blessed thing for us. But, Adam, Adam, tell me, for I have sat here all day asking myself, whether it is a blessed thing to be born, or a penalty that others pay.”

“I think it would be a blessing to be your son,” he said steadily.

“And I think it would be a benediction to be yours,” she answered; “but he would not be yours nor mine, but ours, plus everything in the past, verily heir of all the ages, and the ages were full of pain and sorrow. Oh,” she said passionately, “could you and I who love him so, this son who is only our wish, could you and I who know the weight of this weary world, bind it upon the shoulders of our baby boy, and send him stagger-

## 224 The Master-Knot

ing down the centuries, the new Atlas of this old earth?"

They sat in silence for a long time. Then Adam said slowly, "I don't know, dearest; but I do know that you are tired and hungry, and I am going to take you home."

They rose and disappeared through the gateway together.

## XVII

*Love gives us a sort of religion of our own; we respect another life in ourselves.*

*BALZAC.*



**R**OBIN was shelling peas. Adam was reading her the story of their deluge. He paused, dissatisfied, and said impatiently, —

“I have not described it at all. I have said all I had to say in less than a thousand words; one would think such a scene deserved a hundred thousand.”

Robin smiled her little inscrutable smile. “I think you have done it very well. It is n’t intended to be scientific. You have n’t told all the strata that were turned skyward for a moment when that crevasse opened between us and the town. You will find, if you turn to the first chapter of Genesis, that there is very little detail; but I am sure that the one line, ‘He

## 228 The Master-Knot

made the stars also,' is as eloquent as a treatise on the nebular theory. If you were learned in geology and astronomy and so on, you would load it down with an avalanche of scientific hypotheses, about which you would really know nothing, except by deduction, and over which future scientists would wrangle, part of them making you a god, and the rest proving you a fool. Be content to 'climb where Moses stood,' and produce literature."

" ' Why should an author fret about  
The judgment of posterity ?  
It is not, and it never was,  
And it, perhaps, may never be, ' "

quoted Adam, cynically. "I wonder what they will call us, Robin, and who will lecture on my mistakes in seven or eight thousand years, and show how it never could have happened. Do you suppose there is any one else on earth ?

Did the Atlantis people leave any literature behind them?"

Robin shook her head. "Who really knows? God has not left Himself without a witness, at any time. In some way the story of creation has gone on and on. Every nation has its Eden and flood and Saviour. Esther was the first, I think, to have her wish granted 'even to the half of my kingdom,' and all the fairy stories since have borrowed the phrase. Cinderella is almost as old as Job; and the Irish, the Fenians, claim that Cadmus, the Phœnician, was one of their forebears. Wide as race distinctions were, there were strange and almost unaccountable similarities."

She went indoors to see to her baking, and coming back went on with her work. Adam watched her silently for awhile, and then said curiously, "I

230 The Master-Knot

wonder what you have missed most this year?"

"Pins and needles, and until Christmas, books and shoes and stockings and sugar and a cook-stove and a piano," answered Robin, promptly. "I can live without the opera and a telephone, but if you only knew how I cherish my stock of pins, and with what dread I look forward to the day when, like a poor white trash family I used to know, I shall refer to *the* needle. I used to think you could do anything with a pair of pliers and a bit of wire, but I tremble lest you may not be able to compass a needle." She looked up, and seeing Adam's troubled face said quickly, "Forgive me for being frivolous; I am so happy, I can't help it. What were you thinking of, Adam?"

He got up and walked away a few yards, and cut one of the long thick



yucca leaves, and stripped it down to the central spine, while he went on speaking to her. "I was thinking," he said, "of what Mill said about inventions, and how they had n't helped the laboring man; that they had neither decreased his number of working hours, nor increased his comforts, and wondering whether it would be better for a new race to find an electric light plant alongside their other plants, or whether they would better work out their own salvation, a little at a time, by main strength and awkwardness. I was thinking how strange our books would seem to men and women who knew nothing of the—the late earth." He held out to her what looked something like a needle threaded with coarse white linen thread. "Will your Majesty deign to look at this?"

She took it, and looked at it wonder-

ingly, and then ran in and brought back a torn towel, and began mending it. "Why, it sews very well," she said; "who taught you that?"

"The mother of inventions generally," he answered. "If you ever had gone on the round-up, you might have had occasion for a needle and thread when there was n't any nearer than a hundred miles. But you have n't answered my question."

"About inventions and so on? It seems to me you have to consider the *raison d'être* of a people before you can tell the answer. What is the use of labor-saving inventions, if the time saved is n't of some great value? What is to be the chief end of man in a dispensation that has no catechism as a guide-post?"

"A very different end from the old one," answered Adam, half sternly.

“Work should not come to him as a curse, nor as his greatest boon; at least, not hard, manual labor. There should be work enough to insure ease and comfort, and every one should work freely and gladly. I should educate the individual; he should be strong of body and keen of mind, and should feel that his talents were given him for use, not for concealment; he should use his hands, both of them, and find delight in their work. It is a beautiful world, it always was, but I don't know that the steam-engine brought men's souls closer together, or that the electric light let in any more radiance upon our minds, or that the great telescopes made heaven any nearer. It should be a happier and a healthier world, if it was no more.”

“Adam,” she said abruptly, “if we had children, in what religious faith would you bring them up?”

## 234 The Master-Knot

“I don't know ; I never thought about it very much,” he answered honestly. “I have an ideal in my mind, but I can't explain it. I believe in one source of life, and therefore a common divinity.”

Robin laughed quietly. “That is like the Hindoo proverb, ‘That which exists is one; sages call it variously.’ That has been called pantheism, and for that belief the Jews expelled Baruch Benedict Spinoza from their synagogue. In our time there was a very learned magazine published in its behalf, and I heard David Starr Jordan say no man could tell whether it was a mere jargon of words, meaningless and empty, or whether monism was the profoundest philosophy the world has ever known.”

“I don't care what you call it,” said Adam, stoutly. “I am not afraid of names, and I don't know anything

about any of those religions, pantheism, Spinozism, or monism; but I do know I would rather a child of mine saw God in everything than that he saw God in nothing save his own narrow creed. I would rather he was a pantheist than a Calvinist. Spinoza never burned any one, did he, nor preached that hell was paved with infants' skulls?"

Robin clapped her hands and laughed again. "I beg your pardon for laughing," she said, "but the idea of Spinoza, the 'God-intoxicated man,' presiding over an auto-da-fé is too absurd. If you only remembered anything about his gentle, retiring spirit and melancholy life; I think he was better known in our time than in his own, but his philosophy does not satisfy me. I am willing to grant the identity of life, and its divine possi-

## 236 The Master-Knot

bilities, but I cannot worship it as life itself, a mere manifestation of nature. I know that there is such a thing as living rock, and that it may be killed by a bolt of lightning as readily as a tree; but this does not make it any more worthy of worship than I am, and that is terribly unworthy. The rock and I are types of life, stages in the development of life, but for my child there must be something better. For the child I must lay hold on the everlasting life; I must find the rock that is higher than I. I do not know of any manifestation of that life so great, so godlike, and so lovable as His who said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' "

"But surely you do not believe in the Immaculate Conception?" asked Adam, incredulously.

"I don't care anything about it, one

way or the other. It's the immaculate life that concerns me. As you said yourself a few minutes ago, words cannot frighten me. Am I going to stand carping, 'Can any good come out of Nazareth?' What do I care if it comes out of Sodom and Gomorrah, if it is good?"

"But you surely don't believe in the miracles?" he asked.

"Surely I do, in some of them at least. I have seen a miracle or so myself. Besides, if you remember the greatest proof He gave was that the gospel was preached to the poor. Buddha was a prince; he whom the Jews expected was to reign as a king. What a fall was there! the gospel of hope and joy was brought to the children of Gibeon, the hewers of wood and drawers of water. The love of Christ has wrought greater miracles

## 238 The Master-Knot

than He did. Look at the arena in Rome. Look at the whole countless army of martyrs. When Mrs. Booth died, the eighty thousand women that nightly walked the streets of London rebelled, and for once the long aisles of brick and stone were swept clean of that awful arraignment of civilization. That was more of a miracle than satisfying three thousand souls with food. At least, it's enough of a miracle for me."

The tears came into her eyes, and she gathered up her pans and went into the house.



## XVIII

*Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life:*

*So careful of the type? but no.  
From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone  
She cries, "A thousand types are gone:  
I care for nothing, all shall go."*

TENNYSON.



**T**HEY were sitting in the doorway together. Robin rested her chin in her hands and looked down the valley, the lines of perplexity deepening in her forehead.

“If only we had an angel with a sword, or without one, to tell us what to do,” she said. “If only we were deeply religious with the old-fashioned orthodox religion, that would enable us to believe we were predestined not to be drowned —”

“Or if we believed in a personal God, without whom not a sparrow falleth, though the waters cover the face of the earth and blot out millions of His creatures,” answered Adam.

## 242 The Master-Knot

“After all, can we do better than follow the dictates of Nature?”

“Do you mean to look through Nature up to Nature’s God?” answered Robin. “How can we worship any God as pitiless as Nature? Nature is strong, but is it our place to help her in her care for the single type? Perhaps we are the trilobites of a new Silurian period; well, trilobites were painfully common, but we need not be. Nature’s laws are immutable, so we have been told with wearying insistence, but suppose you and I have wills as strong as Nature herself? Suppose we ask what she has done for the humanity of which we are a part, that she should demand fresh victims from us? Oh, I know; you will tell me, —

“What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty!

in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!’

“And I should answer, —

“‘What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.’

“David or Hamlet, it comes to the same thing. Where are the crowns now, and how can we say Solomon was not right when he said the end of it all was vanity? What is Nature, and on what compulsion must we obey her? The imperative mandates of our own hearts? But what if our hearts are at war with our heads? Are we to follow no higher law than the blind instinct that moves the house-fly? Or will we aspire to the indom-

## 244 The Master-Knot

itable soul of the mocking-birds that feed their young in captivity until they see they are prisoners for life, and then bring them poisonous spiders that they may die rather than live under such conditions? Shall we give hostages to Nature when she has given nothing to us?"

She was standing now and speaking with more vehemence than was her wont. Adam caught her hands, as she flung them out with a gesture full of scorn.

"Do you really think we have nothing? How many million lovers have envied Adam and Eve their paradise? This Nature against which you bring so railing an accusation, — has she taken away more than she has given us? We had ambitions, you and I, but the way of ambition is full of weariness and disappointment and bit-

terness of spirit. We did not expect peace and comfort and joy, but work and turmoil. Our slates were set with a sum —”

“Yes, a sum in vulgar fractions,” answered Robin.

“Perhaps; it was a sum in which the unknown and unknowable quantity determined the result. We had seen a good deal of what is called life, — it is a good name to distinguish it from the death it so much resembles, — and I am half inclined to think Nature has been merciful.”

“But if she was merciful to them,” said Robin, quickly, “why were we omitted?”

“She gave them oblivion, the hereafter, whatever comes hereafter. She gave us each other. We were going to miss one another in the careers we had mapped out. We might have

## 246 The Master-Knot

lost each other forever, or for æons of years. Nothing but a general breaking up of everything would ever have flung us into each other's arms. We were too much interested in my career, my vast influence on the political situation, to consider any existence apart from the setting we had chosen for the play. And, after all, what was it, that career from which we hoped so much? I stood waiting my cue, ready to act my part in the farce or tragedy, whichever it turned out to be."

"I think it was more like a circus," said Robin.

"Very like a circus," he admitted with grim appreciation. "A circus in which no one knew whether he was to be a ringmaster or a clown. There were the financial tight-rope walkers, and the social lion-tamers, and snake-



charmers, and the political acrobats whose falls were unsoftened by any kind of network. There were heat and dust and discomfort, and weary, wretched animals looking out of cages at other weary, tortured animals, that were sometimes scarcely less pachydermatous than themselves. I know the program we had mapped out, the triumphal entry, the daring leaps, the cheers, — but was it worth while? After all, does one care to be the champion bareback rider in life's hippodrome? Nature swept away my sawdust ring, but she gave me heaven for a canopy, earth for an arena, you for a queen. At times I am disposed to take a fatalist view of the case, and think that God, or Nature, knew there was no more to be done with the earth, not so much because of its wickedness, as on account of its stu-

## 248 The Master-Knot

pidity and cruelty. All my plans had centered in a political career, and yet how could a man touch politics and remain undefiled? Yes, I know there were honorable men in politics, but they were lonely, and they hated with an unspeakable hatred all the means that were used to keep them there. And there were any number of men who had been honorable once. When a man becomes possessed by the desire of place, his backbone becomes elastic, and he stoops to things of which he had believed himself incapable. I don't know what it is, but it weakens a man's moral fibre, and breaks down the tissues of his will, and gives him mental astigmatism. How dare I say I should have been any better than the rest?"

“Do you remember your address, a year ago Flag Day, and the old man

with the little bronze button of the Civil War veteran, who stood in front, and shook hands with you afterwards, with tears running down his face? And the applause? Can you honestly say that you find 'to utter love more sweet than praise'? You have told me of your dream of a home, but Emerson said, 'not even a home in the heart of one we love can satisfy the awful soul that dwells in clay.' Can it satisfy you, who hoped and expected so much?"

He hesitated and did not reply at once.

"Are you sure you are not making a virtue of necessity?" she asked a little bitterly.

"I think as much as anything," he said slowly, "I was excusing myself for not having known all along that the real life, and the most useful one, is

the one we could have made together. Principalities and powers and empires and republics have fallen. When God wants to regenerate the world, He begins with the family. Now *I*," with unspeakable scorn, — "*I* intended to begin with a different primary law. I could have made a good home, but I was intent on making an indifferent, honest congressman, or senator, or perhaps president. In a way your home always meant a good deal of what I am trying to say. You always had some one on hand you were trying to make capable of great things by believing in them. You made us welcome, and were ready to listen to our troubles, our literary curiosities, our musical gems and our aspirations. Suppose I had had sense enough to refuse the husks and choose — "

"Don't say it," she answered.

“Don’t say it, even if you mean it, for I should have sent you away, and have felt like reviling you for putting your hand to the plow and turning back. Your ambitions were the most attractive thing about you then. I had n’t pinned my faith on a primary law; I think it was government ownership that I regarded as the great regenerator. I am glad if my home seemed homelike to any one; it never reached my ideal; and when a woman’s home is n’t the hub of her universe, — well, she takes to china painting, or gossip, or philanthropy; a man takes to poker or politics. I took to politics, second-hand. Personally and concretely I abhorred the whole miserable farce, but abstractly, and as a means to an end which I greatly desired, I found it interesting. I admired you infinitely more than

252      The Master-Knot

I liked you in those days, but I wouldn't have married you under any circumstances."

"Why?"

"First, because I didn't want to marry any one; I didn't want to care that much. And, secondly, because I wanted you to devote yourself to your country, and had you possessed a family your devotion would have been divided. I don't see," she went on reflectively, "how you, who know so well how empty it all was, and how hopeless the endeavor to lift it an inch, — I don't see how you can think anything would justify us in making it go on."

"But, on the other hand," he said, "are we justified in snuffing it all out? There was so much that was beautiful, and the possibilities were so glorious! Sweetheart, I shall not be-

lieve you love me if you think the world all cold and dark. I believe now the one law it needs, or has ever needed, is love, the fulfilling of the law."

Robin shook her head, and there was a pathetic quiver about her sensitive mouth. "Is it so? We have sung, 'T is love, it makes the world turn round,' but is it so? Would you give your world that one great principle as the whole of its code of laws?"

"Yes, I would," he answered sturdily. "I should not revive a single law, not even the Ten Commandments, nor any of their variations. You have to read the statutes provided for unnamable crimes to understand just how bad mankind could be. I should not bother my world with Draco, or Solon, or Justinian, or Coke, or Black-

stone. I should give it the code of Christ, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.' To love one's neighbor as oneself, — is n't that code enough for any world? And I should make the neighbor include every dumb creature."

She turned to him, her face radiant with love and trust.

"There is no difference between us in reality," she said: "you would found your political economy on the teachings of Christ, and I my religion. If we realize the unity of life, we must make our religion our law, and our law our religion. Sometimes I think the hand of the Lord is in it, for surely, surely, there never was a nobler man on earth than you."



*XIX*

*For the race is run by one and one and  
never by two and two.*

*KIPLING.*



“**D**O you remember the name of that man we knew,” said Adam one day, “who wrote a book to prove the immortality of the body? He did prove that various people had lived well on to two hundred years. If we were sure of that, we might get the earth very fairly started.”

Robin laughed. “We are not apparently growing any older,” she said; “but we can hardly count on more than a hundred years each.”

“There is one thing you haven’t taken into consideration,” said Adam. “Our children would be several thousand years ahead of the original children of the Garden; they would be further along than you and I in a good many ways.”

## 258 The Master-Knot

“No,” she said, “I have n’t forgotten, but I do not know how much of a load they would bring with them into the world. We called it heredity, the Hindoos called it karma, and, though that is different, educators called it the recapitulation theory.”

Adam shook his head. “I understand heredity,” he said, “but karma and recapitulation are too much for me.”

“Karma is our heritage from former existences,” she answered, “that may have been lived here or elsewhere. It is the sum of our past, good and bad. It is based on a belief in reincarnation, and it is the law that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. It is justice untempered by mercy, and it is at variance with the doctrine of vicarious atonement, though one may believe it and worship Christ as

the highest type of love the world has ever known. Naturally, it does not appeal to the people who are willing to let some one bear the cross for them, and yet I have wondered whether, if we were sure we should not gather figs from thistles, we should sow the thistles so freely. The recapitulation theory makes the child pass through the evolutionary stages of the nation or nations he represents. It has a kind of seven ages of man of its own, and brings him down through all phases, — the savage, the hunter, the explorer, the conqueror, the builder. I don't pretend fully to understand it. I heard one of its ablest exponents say once, 'The soul of the German nation is in the German boy.' Heredity curses or blesses, sometimes both. Before any of these theories prospective parents might well hesitate."

260      The Master-Knot

“Which do you believe?” asked Adam, curiously.

She reflected a moment. “A little of all three; not all of any of them; one would have to be a profound student to understand fully what their adherents claim for them. Heredity plays strange freaks now and then. It is easier to account for Abraham Lincoln by the second theory than by either of the others. His shiftless, untidy mother and commonplace father do not explain such a soul as his; nor was there any reversion in his childhood to the original savage instincts that make children dismember grasshoppers—rather the reverse. I like better to think that, like that other Deliverer, who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, he came to do the will of his and our Father which art in heaven,—came

gladly, freely, knowing the end from the beginning.”

Adam sat up suddenly and looked at her with startled eyes. “Then you think — you mean — you don’t believe — surely you don’t believe we have anything to do with our coming here?”

She smiled. “Surely I do. Our coming is sad enough when we do it voluntarily. It would be quite intolerable to have existence thrust upon us. Besides, it seems blasphemous to me to believe that God has given to every human being the power to bestow an eternal existence. The responsibility is great enough when it is simply a matter of so living that noble souls may seek to be born of us, and undertaking to give them sound minds and bodies.”

Adam looked unconvinced and

troubled. "Where on earth did you get all that?" he asked.

"Well, it is to my mind only an elaboration of Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am.' I am, presupposes that I have been, and will be. If you can't destroy one drop of water, you can't destroy me. If you drop the water on red-hot iron, it instantly becomes an imperceptible mist, the mere ghost of itself, but it will ultimately become fluid again. It seems to me that the scientific fact gives a sound basis for the psychologic probability."

"But think of all the miserable human beings born daily. Do you think any one would choose such surroundings?"

"You and I never wanted to go anywhere badly enough to crowd ourselves under the cow-catcher, or upon the trucks, but there were those who



did. We did n't want to see the parade badly enough to stand on the street corner for hours; but you worked your way through college, and we have both sat in the top gallery to hear 'Tannhäuser.' We were willing to put up with the whips and scorns, which is another way of saying the garlic and tobacco, for the sake of the music. In any event the experiment was of brief duration. No one gets more than a fragment in an ordinary lifetime."

"If you think that," said Adam, "I can't see that there is any responsibility about it. We should not thrust life on any one."

"True," she assented. "Your position is unassailable, but still it seems to me the responsibility remains. In the first place, granting that my hypothesis is true, how can we tell whether

## 264 The Master-Knot

to live is gain? How do we know that the next generation would be better and stronger than we are? Moreover, I only give this to you as my idea. I do not say it is true; I believe it to be so, but I do not know anything whatsoever about it. I can't prove it, and it may be transcendental rubbish. I rather imagine you think it is."

"Not exactly that," he said, coloring and laughing, "but certainly it is rather amazing when one hears it for the first time. I daresay I shall come to believe it too. So far as I can see, you are about as unorthodox as I am."

"I have times of relapse," she said. "Then I think we are being tempted like the first Adam and Eve. They were commanded to multiply and reign. You and I would n't ask anything

better, but as a rule one's duty is not attractive. It seems to me just as likely that we are to prove that the lesson is learned, and a man and woman may love each other unselfishly and nobly, foregoing their own desires to save others. Under the old dispensation it was said, 'Greater love hath no man than this;' is it not possible now that the greatest love is that which lays down its life untransmitted? If Christ could pray that the cup of suffering and death might pass from Him, dare we press the bitter draught of being to other lips?"

"Dare we dash the full goblet of joy and opportunity from them?" asked Adam, gravely.

"I wish I knew," she said. "I wish I knew!"

"Have you ever thought what it will mean," he said, "if we adopt the

## 266 The Master-Knot

other alternative? Have you thought of the desolation and loneliness of growing old and helpless and finally—” He stopped, and she threw out her hands as if to ward off the thoughts he called before her.

“Oh, yes, yes, I have thought, and it is terrible. I keep remembering a picture I saw in the French Exhibit. It was of a man and a woman; the woman was dead, and he had dug her grave, his broken sword lay at his side, and he had wrapped her in his coat, and begun to cover her over. He could not go on, and knelt, looking at her with a despair on his face that has haunted me ever since. The name, Manon Lescaut, meant nothing to me then, but the story of the picture was enough by itself. All last year I kept seeing that terrible picture. Sometimes it was you, some-

times it was I, that dug the grave and went mad looking into it."

"I should not bury you," said Adam, grimly. "I should carry you to the cliff and take you in my arms and jump. The sea is deep and cruel there."

"Sometimes," she hesitated a moment, then went on, — "sometimes I think that would be the best way for us now, I mean if we decide we have no right to be happy in the old way; for I should be afraid we could not always be strong."

"Very well," he answered; "when we decide, it shall be literally life or death."



## XX

*The ant and the moth have cells for each of their young, but our little ones lie in festering heaps in homes that consume them like graves ; and night by night, from the corners of our streets, rises up the cry of the homeless, — “ I was a stranger and ye took me not in.”*

RUSKIN.





FOR a time they busied themselves with different things about their little home, worked in the garden, and held a round-up of their stock that they might know the extent of their wealth; and because, in a life quite apart from human beings, animals come to take their place to a greater extent than might seem possible.

It was a very pleasant time. Everything seemed so gentle, so willing to be friends, and so certain of their good-will.

“You used to be a Kipling fiend,” said Adam, one morning, when they had been salting the cattle, and were resting before going home. “Did n’t he write a Jungle tale about ‘How

272      The Master-Knot

Fear Came'? He ought to be here now to write another to show how Fear might go."

"It seems to me he did," Robin answered, running her fingers through the short, curly forelock of a colt that stood placidly licking her hand. "I wonder that they don't remember longer, or perhaps they know that we think they are folks. Really, I think we ought to hold a reception, a kind of salon, once a week, so as to keep acquainted with our neighbors."

"You are an absurd child," he said, laughing; "but does that mean that you have really decided to go on living?"

"I don't know," she said. "What did we determine? By the way, which side of this question are you on?"

"Both," he said decidedly.

"Oh! then we can't do like those

men Cooper told about, in 'The Pioneers,' wasn't it? who argued and argued every night until at last they convinced each other, and then started in to argue it out again."

"No," he answered, "I rather think that we are answering ourselves rather than each other, anyhow. Robin, where was 'the land of Nod'?"

"That is one of the questions that I was sent to bed for asking a preacher who was visiting at our house, when I was about seven years old. They hurried me hence before he had a chance to answer, so I never found out. But I know what you are thinking of, and I have thought of it too. Perhaps there isn't any land of Nod, or any land at all. And I have thought, also, how it would be if one of us died and left the other with little children. You might take my

## 274 The Master-Knot

body and jump off the rock, but you couldn't take them too, and still less could you leave them."

"I have thought of the risk to you," he said, "and felt that not even for the sake of a child would I let you come so near death."

She laughed a little. "That is really funny," she said. "You must have been reading Michelet; I never thought of that at all. I am very well and strong, and my habits and my clothes are not such as to hamper my life nor endanger that of another. There is next to no risk, so far as that is concerned, certainly none I would not gladly take. But I have dreaded afterwards, when the child might fall ill and need help that we could not give it."

"Because there are no doctors in the world?" said Adam, with a touch

of cynicism. "I don't know that we are not better off without them. The greatest of them confessed that it was guess-work. The best doctors I ever knew were always trying to make their patients live more simply, take more exercise, and give nature a chance; they never resorted to medicine until there was nothing else to do. If all the germs and microbes have gone with them, the earth can stand the loss. The main thing is to be well born, and when the body is healthy and leads a natural life, while it may know pain, it need not be a prey to disease. Very few children had a heritage worth having. It had been bartered away. No wonder we were taught to say, 'There is no health in us.'"

"Do you remember Gannett's 'Not All There'?" she asked soberly. "I

276    The Master-Knot

am not sure I can recall it, but it began this way: —

“ Something short in the making,  
    Something lost on the way,  
As the little soul was taking  
    Its path to the break of day.

“ Only his mood or passion,  
    But it twitched an atom back,  
And she for her gods of fashion  
    Filched from the pilgrim’s pack.

“ The father did not mean it,  
    The mother did not know,  
No human eye had seen it,  
    But the little soul needed it so.

“ Thro’ the street there passed a cripple  
    Maimed from before its birth ;  
On the strange face gleamed a ripple  
    Like a half dawn on the earth.

“ It passed, and it awed the city  
    As one not alive nor dead ;  
Eyes looked and burned with pity.  
    ‘ He is not all there,’ they said.

## The Master-Knot 277

“Not all! for part is behind it,  
Lying dropped on the way;  
That part — could two but find it,  
How welcome the end of day!”

For a long while neither spoke, then Robin went on. The colt had wandered back to its mother, and she sat with her hands clasped, and her eyes looking far out to sea.

“I don't blame people for dreading the responsibility, nor even for shirking it, when I think of all the conditions we had to face. Men who thought they had hedged their trades about with so much skill that they had banished competition, found that they had only succeeded in bringing into the field the machine that banished them. And everywhere there was such ghastly poverty, — poverty of body and brain and soul. We had gone back to patrons and patronesses.

## 278 The Master-Knot

Men or women did not do anything of themselves any more,—they did not sing or play, or give a reading, or exhibit a painting. They starved, or they performed or exhibited ‘under the auspices of.’ It has always been the same. Given a pure democracy, and demos reigns sooner or later. The shiftless go to the bottom, the thrifty to the top, and then like the upper and nether millstones, they grind everything between them. That which is below cries, ‘Alms!’ and that which is above responds, ‘Largesse,’ and the voice that cries, ‘Justice,’ is stifled between. The stone that crushed from above and the rock that ground from below were very near, and men dreaded them, for when the grist is ground, and flint strikes upon flint, the conflagration is at hand. Do you think I am talking like a Popu-



list campaign book? I only know what I saw, and what the poets have said. I wouldn't dare to be as radical as Lowell, nor as bitter as Tennyson, nor as savage as Carlyle, or Ruskin, or Hugo. We had overcome the sharpness of death, but whence could we hope for deliverance from the sharpness of living?"

"We have been delivered," said Adam, slowly, "but you don't seem disposed to be the Miriam of this Israel — limited."

"Well, no," answered Robin. "I should like to believe that you and I were rewarded for our superhuman excellence by being saved when Pharaoh and his multitudes went under, but a somewhat wide acquaintance with other people forbids. On the other hand, we can't have been left on account of our superlative badness. Truly,

280      The Master-Knot

Adam, don't you feel sometimes as if you would rather have died with the rest?"

He hesitated. The question was so unexpected, and so fraught with possibilities. She watched the struggle in his face and honored him for it. He put back a stray lock of hair and kissed her forehead before he answered.

"The streak of cowardice that we all of us have in us," he said finally, "the distrust of myself, and the doubt of all systems of life of which I know anything, prompts me to answer yes; for I think even if we had died, you and I would still be together. I think sometimes we have been, in the past, but whether we have or not, I know we shall be in the future. So while the mental part of me, — which it seems to me is the weakest and most

contemptible part of man, because it is always reasoning him out of what his soul tells him is true, — while the mental part of me might find it easier to be dead than to know what we ought to do, everything else in me rejoices. I know that in the great plan we have a part, it seems to me a very happy and beautiful part. In all our world there is no cause for anger or hatred or sin. There is friendliness and content and gentleness and love all around us; look up, dear, and see how near heaven seems.”

But though she looked up, she saw only the light in his eyes.



*XXI*

*"We're all for love," the violins said.*

*SIDNEY LANIER.*



**R**OBIN'S music was a source of great delight to both of them. There was such a sense of time, infinite and unlimited, that they ceased to be the hurrying mortals of earth. The joy of life crept into their hearts, and they grew young with the new world.

One evening they watched the full moon come up over the mountains. She had been playing a few desultory airs, and looking up asked, —

“Who is it says ‘music is love in search of a word’?”

“If you don't know, I'm sure I don't,” answered Adam, laughing. “Do you know that you quote entirely too much?”

## 286 The Master-Knot

“Oh, yes,” she said lightly. “I always knew that if I ever should break into print, the critics, supposing they ever deigned to notice me, would say, as they said of Lubbock’s ‘Beauties of Life,’ that it was n’t a book, but a compendium of useful quotations. But do you really dislike quoting? I think it takes as much or nearly as much originality to quote well as to invent.”

“Oh, no!” he interposed.

“No? Well, it seems so to me. I think the thing first myself, that is original so far as I am concerned, though it may be old as the hills, and then it comes to me afterward, in a dozen ways, perhaps, as other people have said it. I realize that in the kaleidoscope of life the pattern before my mind’s eye approximates that which others have seen. We don’t say a man knows too many synonyms or



antonyms, and I don't see much difference."

"I have a misty memory that quotation is said to be a confession of inferiority," answered Adam.

"That's Emerson," she said, laughing; "but he also says, 'genius borrows nobly,' and I am willing to confess inferiority to a great many people; all that implies is that one should only quote well. If it was n't that I'm not sure of the words, and that I can't verify them, I should confound you with a citation from Disraeli."

"Go on," said Adam, lazily; "I don't mind being crushed."

"It is to the effect that people think that where there is no quotation there must be great originality. Then he says, 'the greater part of our writers, in consequence, have become so original that no one cares to imitate them;

## 288      The Master-Knot

and those who never quote are seldom quoted.' That's about it. Now are you answered?" She laughed gleefully. "It is delicious to disagree with you. I had almost forgotten that it was possible."

He echoed her laugh with the care-free heartiness of a boy. "I am going to make a riddle," he said. "Prepare yourself; this is the first conundrum of the new world. Why is it better to disagree than to differ?"

She made a little grimace. "It's a wonder the Sphinx does not rise from the other side of the world and eat you," she said with derision. "Anybody who loved anybody could answer such a poor little excuse for a riddle as that; besides, it sounds like an extract from somebody's 'First Easy Lessons in Rhetoric.' Don't you see that I can disagree *with* you, while I must

## The Master-Knot 289

differ *from* you? That is too disgracefully easy. Indeed, Adam, that riddle of yours brings back every doubt, for they say — scientists and ologists and learned people, you know — that there is hope for delinquents and defectives, but none for degenerates, and that is an awfully degenerate joke.”

“Play for me,” he said, “and don’t call names.”

She lifted the bow and drew it across the strings in a series of cadences so wildly mournful that he shuddered. She put the bow down, and laid her hand upon the strings to still them. In the old days she had been given to sudden changes of mood, but of late she had been almost serene.

“What is it?” he asked gently.

“Oh, nothing,—everything! I was thinking of another thing which those

## 290 The Master-Knot

wise ones said," she answered, with more bitterness than she had shown for many months. "It was that word 'degenerate' brought it back. You know birds are a very low order of being, a branch of the reptile family, in truth, and I have heard people say that musicians are generally lacking in something. They either have no moral or financial sense, and cannot be bound by ordinary rules. And I am musical to the very tips of my fingers. It is as if I could hear the song of the silence, — I feel its vibrations like those of a great organ."

She walked up and down, her hands back of her head, and the moonlight shining on her upturned, troubled face.

"There is another scientific fact you forget," he said.

She stopped to listen, and he went on.

## The Master-Knot 291

“When a race has run its course, nature cries ‘habet,’ and nothing can alter its fate. It was not alone the merciless onslaughts of the white man that exterminated the buffalo. They died, and none came to take their places. They vanished, less on account of man’s cruelty than by reason of their own sterility. Degenerates or regenerates, can’t we leave the decision with a power that forever builds or destroys, in accordance with a law we do not understand, a higher law that comes from the source of all law, whatever that source may be? Don’t think any more, but play for me. In spite of my lecture, I will quote too; my mother used to sing a hymn that went like this, —

‘I’d soar and touch the heavenly strings,  
And vie with Gabriel while he sings,’ —

Do you know it?”

## 292 The Master-Knot

She began the old tune, "Ariel," and then wandered on, playing many airs that brought back forgotten days. Adam threw himself down on the grass to listen, half jealously, for she seemed to forget everything. She had seated herself on a great boulder, and, leaning back against it, her eyes looking into the blue depths above her, she played on and on. The old tunes were merged in new ones, and the high sustained notes of the Cavalleria, the subtle minor of Wagner, the exquisite sweetness of Beethoven and Schubert filled the moonlit cañon, and still she played on, melodies new to Adam, intoxicating, full of a wild ecstasy, that filled his very soul, and thrilled through him till he felt all power of resistance swept away. Every other desire in the world was lost in the supreme and

## The Master-Knot 293

overwhelming longing to gather her to his heart and hold her there forever. The very air was steeped in melody. The full majestic chords rose and melted in unison with the high, exquisitely sweet notes, and throbbed their life away. She held the bow suspended a moment, then very softly, half unconsciously, played a dreamy lullaby, and laid the violin down in her lap.

Adam took her and it into his arms.

“Be careful, put it down gently,” she said faintly; “it is your soul and mine. Do you not know the secret of Antonio Stradivari, of all the great makers of violins? Ah, they solved our riddle, Love, ages ago. Do you not remember the story of Jacob Steiner, and how he spent days and days in the woods, selecting the trees for his violins, and how the spirits of

## 294 The Master-Knot

the trees revenged themselves by telling him of their ruined lives till he went mad?"

"But there was no madness in this music," Adam answered, "except, except —"

"The supreme, sublime madness of love? Do you not know, surely you do, that every perfect violin is as much man and woman as you and I? The back of the violin is made from the timber of the female tree, the belly of the male tree. The harmony depends on their vibrations, as they clasp each other in an embrace as real —"

"As this," he cried, drawing her closer, and bending his handsome head until their lips met. "Sweet, must I envy that violin?"

He felt her heart beating wildly against his own, their arms closed around each other convulsively. The



## The Master-Knot 295

sweetness of the music-laden, flower-scented air filled his senses.

“God! how I love you!” he said.

A frightened look came into her eyes, and she struggled, for a moment, futilely.

“Let me go!” she whispered; “let me go!”

“Do you want me to?” he answered, studying her face in the moonlight.

“No,” she said. “No, never again, but, oh, Adam!”



*XXII*

*I'm weary of conjectures — this must end  
them.*

*ADDISON.*



**A**DAM had to go to the cane-fields across the range, and one of the calves needed Robin's ministrations, so she could not go with him. He started before the stars were set, that he might be back before night, and returned twice to kiss her before he finally got away.

Left with the long day ahead of her, restless and lonely, she gave the small house a thorough sweeping and cleaning. She had finished her dusting, and was rearranging the furniture, when she shoved back the long chest and struck the framework of the window with some little violence. It was enough to jar a rusty key from its place above the casement, and it dropped upon the chest with a kind of

## 300 The Master-Knot

ominous clink as it struck the lock, and fell upon the floor. She took it up and looked at it curiously, and then, kneeling, fitted it in the lock.

“I wonder,” she mused, “what I shall set free if I open this box; is it Pandora’s? But there was nothing left in hers but hope, and that is all we need. How happy we could be if we dared to hope!”

She turned the key with a wrench, and the hasp shot from its place. The chest was nearly empty, there being but one parcel in it. This was done up carefully in a square of linen, pinned here and there. On the bottom of the chest were several folds of white paper. Very slowly she lifted out the parcel and opened it. The treasure was a gown; it was of a heavy, satiny weave of linen, very yellow and creased. The bodice was made without sleeves

or neck, and the skirt was a kind of kilt plaited affair; the whole effect was Greek, and, simple as it was, it seemed beautiful to Robin after her year of dark, utilitarian clothing. There was white underwear, and even white stockings, and a pair of slippers.

Robin drew a long breath of delight, and laying all her finery upon the table placed the irons over the tripod that she might smooth the wrinkles out, and set about making the necessary alterations at once. She worked rapidly in spite of her excitement, but the hours slipped away.

“I must try it on,” she said, “before Adam comes; there will be plenty of time, and then I will put it away until—”

Shroud or wedding-gown? She did not finish the sentence. She dressed slowly; but when she had finished she

## 302 The Master-Knot

was startled to see that the image in the glass was so much fairer than she had ever thought herself. Suddenly she discovered, with something like a pang, that there was no belt, and hurried back to the chest to look again.

As she twitched out the remaining layer of paper in her eagerness, a long white satin ribbon dropped from it, and a little heap of fine muslin lay on the floor of the chest. She caught up the ribbon with an exclamation of delight and adjusted it with trembling fingers. Her flushed cheeks and radiant eyes, the long heavy braid of hair, her round white arms and shoulders, made her a vision of delight indeed. When she had quite completed her toilet, she sat down by the chest to inspect its last secret. As she took up the pile of lace and muslin, her heart



## The Master-Knot 303

seemed to stop beating for a moment. She had forgotten. Only the hands of the prospective mother could have fashioned such dainty garments as these. Everywhere the eternal question. All her perplexities had fallen from her in the joy of dressing herself as Adam's bride should be decked, howbeit Adam saw her not, but the great problem of life confronted her still.

She put the tiny garments down on the chest, closed now, having given up its mystery, its hope of the world, and knelt by it, touching them with loving, reverent fingers till the tears blinded her, and she gathered up the clothes and kissed them as she had never kissed Adam, as she had never kissed anything in her life. After awhile the tears ceased to flow, and there stole over her a gracious calmness and then the slumber of a child.

## 304 The Master-Knot

She did not hear Adam, nor see him, until he passed the window and stood in the doorway, all the sunset glow back of him. Then she started to her feet, her arms closing instinctively over the tiny garments she had gathered to her breast, as she stepped back, her face flushing and paling all in a moment.

He stood as if he dared not move lest the vision vanish, but heart and soul looked out of his eyes.

“Eve,” he said, “Eve!”

She turned, and he sprang toward her with an eager cry of joy.

“Eve,” he repeated, “Eve, my love, my soul! You have decided; you are going to be my wife. Oh, do not torture yourself or me any longer with doubts that did not enter the mind of God Almighty when He made us what we are. You are my world, dearer

## The Master-Knot 305

than life, more necessary than the air we breathe. We are only one being, separated God knows how long, but united now forever. Nothing can part us again."

He stopped and held out his arms to her. He had taken her into their shelter very often, but now he wanted her to come to him and nestle against his heart of her own will. She took a single step, stretching out her arms to him with a gesture of infinite trust and abandon. The long sheer dress fluttered down to the floor, and lay between them.

They stood as still as if frozen.

"Dare you cross it?" she said, and hid her face in her hands.

He stooped and picked it up, and looked at it as a man might look at the soul of something of which he had never seen the body. He had a

## 306 The Master-Knot

sense of his own strength, the glory of his manhood, and a vision of his weakness. She watched him breathlessly. He put the garment down on the table and smoothed it out gently. There was in his face the combined look of a man who sees the cradle and the coffin of his firstborn.

She went and stood beside him, touching the dress timidly. He covered her hand with his own.

“My wife,” he said, “we know all there is to say, all there is to risk. We must do what is right. I am going now to set everything at liberty. It is nearly sundown; you will meet me at the rock in half an hour. If we give each other our right hands, we will fear no evil, not though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, for the love in our hearts is deathless, and though the sun sets, it

is to rise upon another shore. Death is only an incident, but life is eternal.”

“We could not choose differently?”  
And though she spoke with the upward inflection it was not a question.

“No, it would be quite impossible for either of us to desire what the other did not. And much as we love each other, we will know we have loved our race and honored God first in our decision. To live, if we live, not for ourselves alone, but for the good of our kind; to renounce love, the unspeakable gift, if need be, for the sake of what seems to us right.”

“And if I give you my left hand —?”

The sudden flash of light in his eyes half blinded her. He took both her hands in his and looked deep in her beautiful unfathomable eyes.

“Then the morning stars will sing

## 308 The Master-Knot

together, and all the sons of God shall shout for joy.”

The sun dropped lower and lower over the high sharp peaks at the west, covering their white summits with a flood of golden glory. The sullen roar of the ocean seemed hushed, and across its wide expanse the last beams of the setting sun made radiant pathways of crimson and gold. A lark far up in the heavens sang its few clear notes as it hastened homeward. Far away on the mountain-side the cattle lay placidly, and a mare whinnied to her colt. The air was soft and warm and drowsy with the scent of many flowers, the sounds of nestling birds, the drone of an insect here and there, the cheerful call of the crickets.

Adam stood by the rock and waited for her. She came toward him, all the light of the world seeming to fall

## The Master-Knot 309

upon her and circle her in a halo that transformed her white draperies, and glistened like a million gems in the sparse grass about her feet.

They made each other no greeting, but stood and looked into each other's eyes, grave and sweet with the exaltation of their purpose. And, standing so, they clasped hands, and the word they spoke was the same, for they by searching had found out God.





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