

# DECEPTIONS

WHEN before the altar the priest asked her, "Are you content?" it was with all her soul Gemma had responded, "Yes!"

Oh, yes; she was content indeed. Through the cloud of costly lace which enveloped her in its snowy transparency she saw the vast church all dotted with lights, resplendent in the dark gleam of mosaics upon golden backgrounds, animated by the slight movement of the very elegant crowd that filled it, lighted by oblique rays descending from the nave, all a glitter of gold, silks and brilliants, and it was her own future that she seemed to see thus—the years of luxury and wealth which her rich marriage was preparing for her. And had it not been the dream for which she sighed? She, the ideal blond, of eighteen years, with the tall and proud figure, the pure, disdainful profile under heavy curls like those of an archangel, with naughty eyes sparkling like blue gems under the golden fringes of her long eyelashes.

She had been for a long time a poor girl, the daughter of citizens who had seen better days, that marvelous human lily. She had experienced all the petty troubles, all the cruel daily sufferings of misery that conceals itself. The poor and inelegant gown, painfully remodeled every year; the insolence of creditors, humiliations, continual tormenting thoughts of money—she had experienced them all, and in her little heart, eager for pleasure and enjoyment, swollen with unsatisfied longings, a dream was arisen little by little, occupying all the room, rendering her insensible to all the rest—the dream of at last becoming rich.

She wanted it absolutely; she was born for it; she was rich now. That "yes" which she had just pronounced had by its three magic letters changed her destiny, and she was so content, so happy, that it appeared to her it was all a dream; that her Mechlin veil was a cloud that transported her into the realms of the impossible, across a sidereal heaven, of which the diamond pins thrust among her tresses formed the flaming stars, and in order to return to reality she must cast her eyes toward her husband, Luigo Marchis, kneeling beside her in the mystic, velvety shade of the altar lit by the tremulous brightness of the candles.

Ah, there was nothing ideal about him, poor fellow! In vain he straightened his correct person of an elegant man, with his accurately shaved face, with slender brown mustache, and a still fresh color that gave him something the look of an actor. He remained none the less old, with his powerful shoulders a little bent, with his eyelids grown heavy and crow's feet toward his temples, with the gray locks that appeared here and there among his brown hair, with his forty-seven years, of which the weariness was more conspicuous beside that radiant and blond spring.

Forty-seven years! How was it possible? He felt his heart so palpitating, full of tears as in youth, and he could not comprehend how so much time had passed. He could not persuade himself of the incredible fact—forty-seven years passed without knowing Gemma.

For they had been acquainted with each other only two months! Marchis, however much he had frequented society, drawn there by his banking connections, had never let himself be talked to of marriage. What! A wife, children, troubles, cares, disappointment! Not even by idea!

And at forty-seven years one evening, present from motives of curiosity at a ball to which the employees of his bank had invited him, he must needs be smitten by the exquisite, vaporous grace of that blond girl, dressed simply in white, entering on the arm of a funny little man with a baby face and a big, silvery beard—her father, a modest clerk in the bank; a rather ridiculous little old man who, beside that divine apparition, slender in her robes of snow, made one think of the gnomes of folk tales, always crouching at the feet of fairies.

Ah, weakness of hearts growing old! That apparition was enough to shake all the ideas of Luigo Marchis concerning matrimony, and as the old gnomes, despite his absolute nullity, was an honest citizen, incapable of resisting the assiduous of the director to his pretty daughter, the suitor had been greatly pleased with the consent of that little maiden of eighteen, that beautiful creature, that blond being, to become his wife. Now he trembled with joy. His eyes were misty with vivid emotion—not perceiving that that, too, was a sign of old age—and it was a voice choked with joy that to the question of the priest, "Are you content?" replied, "Oh, yes!"

Now it is done. United—forever united. Having risen to their feet, she with an elegant and light impulse, like a lily wind-lifted on its stem, he with a little effort and difficulty, wearied by emotion, they go down from the altar arm in arm. Now they pass through the church amid the murmurs of compliments which arise amid the shadows of the aisles, among the dull scraping of feet and the rustle of gowns. There on the peristyle, among the white columns, is a living wave of sun and air which comes to meet them, like a recall to real life outside of the mystic dream of the church, the creaking of the line of carriages that advanced, the slow descent of the steps, with the white train of the bride spreading and dragging upon the stairs in folds like snow, soft and light. Then the carriages depart. They are alone for the first time in the narrow

space of the carriage, which the faded dress fills with its whiteness, and the bouquet of orange blossoms, with its acute perfume of intoxicating virginity. And it is then that, conquered by the charm of that face, so delicate and proud amid its large, pallid curls, by the splendor of those blue eyes, the elderly bridegroom bends over her to kiss her.

"Dear me, dear me!"

And to see the tranquillity with which those finely cut, rose colored lips return the kisses through the veil, the question arises whether it is the bridegroom that she kisses or the Mechlin lace, at 500 the meter.

Ah, there are adorers around that beautiful Signora Marchis, so lovely and so young, married to an old man! It was expected that this fortress would be an easy one to conquer. Precisely on her wedding day Vico Molise, the most elegant and skeptical of the journalists of upper Italy, had propounded to his friends this theorem:

"Given a beautiful girl, very poor; given that she marries a rich old man; divide the number of his years by that of the hundreds of thousands of lire of which she becomes mistress, and you will have the number of months necessary for her to take a lover."

And as soon as he could he began, with many others, to attempt the demonstration of that theorem.

Well, this time the impeccable psychological diagnosis of Vico Molise had been found to fail. Not only, after some months, the beautiful Signora Marchis had no lover, but it appeared also that she never was to have one.

Always dressed with an adorable elegance, with a luxury full of good taste, the beautiful Gemma loved to amuse herself, moving freely in that society new for her, finding herself in her right place as a marvelous plant in a vase of valuable porcelain, developing itself in all its splendor. She went to dances, to the theater, enjoying the plebsite of admiration provided by her beauty, coqueting a little with her adorers, flustering about the fire in order to make them sparkle, her wings of a golden butterfly, but never letting herself be burned.

In the very moment of a declaration, in the midst of one of those waltzes whose notes seem made on purpose to stifle expiring virtue in their serpentine spirals, she cut short her adorer by turning her angelic head and saying serenely:

"I don't see my husband. Look a little where my husband is if you will be so kind."

And it was known that her greatest delight was to relate precisely to her husband the declarations which she had received. When she came home with him from a ball, all wrapped in the white silken folds of her sordid dahl, with her pure throat, her snowy shoulders that blossomed still more fair from her swansdown bow; when in the evening she met him in the dining room, still in visiting costume, with her slim waist tightly compressed by an exquisitely elegant gown, with her face animated by the slight excitement which elegant conversation always produces in a young woman, she amused herself immensely in addressing to her husband some of these provoking and roguish phrases:

"You know I was at Countess Folsch's. Molise was there, you know—always faithful and always in despair. And also Comelli, he has such lugubrious gallantry—he has promised to kill himself for my sake within a month. We shall see. Ah, ah!"

And, sitting opposite to him in a rustle of satin and jet, making shine like two stars the brilliant, large as hazelnuts, which adorned her small ears, she continued to laugh, with her elastic laughter, full of mischief and full of tenderness.

Ah, indeed old Marchis could call himself a fortunate man!

Fortunate? Yes, he ought to have considered himself so. When he set himself to reason about it, to describe mentally his conjugal situation, he had to conclude that he would have done wrong to complain of his destiny. And yet—

What of the terribly unexpected had he now discovered in the depths of the pure sapphire of Gemma's eyes? Was there arisen in his soul the doubt that that faithfulness against every trial, that coldness toward her admirers, was nothing but the wish to preserve intact a position acquired with difficulty and that precisely to that position was directed all the tenderness shown toward himself? I do not know, but the vivid and impetuous joy of the wedding was no longer in him, although his love remained the same, and a painful doubt thrilled in his voice when he replied to the playful confidence of Gemma, forcing himself to laugh too:

"Take care, now, take care—the vengeance of the tyrant hangs over you!"

Ah, the poor tyrant! How he loved her! How she had known how to blind him with her little hands, white and perfumed as two lilies! For nothing in the world would he have discovered the truth, changed into certainty his promising doubt. So she had only to ask in order to obtain, for now for him that love of which he doubted had become his life, and he felt a painful structure at his heart at the mere thought that a day might come when he would be obliged to refuse her something. Yet that day came. Suddenly, by one of those mysterious complications of business, his bank, which until then had gone from triumph to triumph, underwent a violent shock. Not a noisy downfall, one of those open, public ruins which produce great failures, but one of those deep, intimate, secret crises that must be borne without a word, a lament, under penalty of death; that can be overcome only by force of small privations, little hidden savings. It is then that strict economy in the family becomes necessary. The

luxury of Gemma to these moments became absolutely ruinous for her husband; he ought to have warned her, he ought to have checked her. He dared not, he continued to content her, but very soon came the time when he could do no more.

It was on the occasion of a great ball to which she was to go. She had ordered from Paris a marvelous gown that became her to perfection. Still she was not satisfied. Some days before, in the showcase of the most fashionable jeweler of the city, a diadem had set in revolution all the feminine imaginations; a superb jewel of antique style, set in silver gilt of a starry pailon, where the brilliant seemed drops of flame. Gemma wished to have it, and indeed it would be difficult to find a face adapted to the almost religious richness of that jewel more than her snowy profile of an angel in ecstasy.

Ten thousand francs was the price of that jewel, and Marchis did not have them. Mute, immovable, his heart oppressed, he listened to Gemma's words as she described it to him. How could he tell her, how could he ever tell her, that he had not the 10,000 francs! It was terrible. To another woman who should have had that caprice one might have proposed to have her own diamonds reset after that model or perhaps even to have an imitation diadem made. No one would have suspected it. But he felt that the danger lay in confessing his powerlessness. Yet it must be done. And he made an effort at courage.

Gemma had seated herself beside him, throwing back and bending a little to one side her blond head with that irresistible feminine movement which displays the white throat, the pure line descending from the slender neck to the full bloomed bust, down to the round and flexible waist.

"I would like to have it. It seems to me that I should look well. Don't you think so? I have a great wish to be beautiful. If you knew why?"

She laughed now deliciously, with the air of her roguish hours. He was silent for a moment. Then, fixing a vague look upon the delicate designs of the oriental carpet, palling as if from an inward wound, he murmured:

"The fact is that I do not know—I do not really know whether—whether I shall be able to buy it for you?"

"Why?"

She had quickly raised her head, much surprised, uneasy, looking at him. Such a thing had never happened to her.

Marchis wiped his forehead and resumed his discourse:

"The fact is—you see, in a bank like ours there are moments that—certain moments in which one cannot—in which it is impossible."

What was impossible for him in that moment was to finish the phrase. He stopped and lifted his eyes timidly to her, desolately, as if to beg her to help him. She was very pale, with a sudden hardness in all her features, in her compressed mouth, in her knit brows, in her sparkling eyes.

"Have you not ten thousand francs? Is it possible?"

And her voice was as hard as her look, a profound hardness that startled him. But all at once her face changed expression; she recovered her fresh, tender laugh, and the sweet and limpid ray was rekindled in her blue eyes.

"Come, you want to tell me stories, so as not to buy me anything. Deceitful! I that wished to be beautiful in order to drive Vico Molise a little crazy. He has declared to me that he is tired of my perfidy. See, you deserve—do you know that I am becoming angry with you?"

She really believed that she had hit the truth with her words. Indeed he had so well kept up the illusion with her, he had hidden so jealously his embarrassment, that she did not know how to explain this sudden restriction. But meanwhile every word of hers was a blow to the heart of Marchis. He saw her already at the ball, passing from arm to arm, with her step like a flying angel; listening to the insidious compliments of Vico Molise and his kind and keeping meantime in her heart that heaven of rancor against him because of his refusal. And he saw himself again, as he had seen himself a little while before in the mirror, old, weary, worn, beside her, so fresh, young, with eyes sparkling from the cruel scorn of one who has made an unequal bargain.

Suddenly he rose like one who has taken a decision, passed his hand across his brow and, without replying, went away to go out of the house. She believed that she had conquered and let him go without moving herself, only with a flash of cunning in her eyes. But when he was on the stairs the door opened, and a blond head appeared between the folding doors:

"We are agreed, then?"

He did not reply, and she heard his step down the stairway, slow, heavy, weary.

The evening of the ball Marchis knocked at the door of his wife's dressing room.

"Come in." And he entered.

In the little dressing room so illuminated as to seem on fire, with the air filled with fragrance from the little unstoppered bottle of perfume, all gleaming white with the disorder of feminine apparel scattered about, Gemma stood erect before the mirror between two kneeling maids, ready dressed for the ball. She was truly radiant in her gown of white satin with almond blossoms, with fresh sprays of almond flowers around the neck of the dress, at the waist, among the waving folds of the train. Issuing from that covering of delicate, pale, dawn tinted flowers, she, too, was fresh as they, with her fatally rosy complexion, as if she were one of those flowers become a person. But under her latest gleamed, and the flash of cold and cruel rancor.

Her husband had not given her the diadem.

But, hearing him enter, she turned, and seeing that he held a casket in his hands, she comprehended everything. With a bound she was beside him, her arms twisted around his neck.

"Oh, how good you are! How good you are! How I love you!" He trembled all over and was very pale. Gemma did not even perceive it. All at once, with one of her irresistible movements, she loosened her arms from his neck, took with one hand the casket, and with the other holding her husband's hand she led him after her to the mirror. She seated herself and opened the casket. Among puffs of red plush, under the burning light, the diadem sent forth sparks like a flame. She had a new outbreak of joy, took the husband's head between her hands, drew it down and kissed his forehead, oh, the forehead of a corpse, icy and livid! Then, without looking at his features, his wandering gaze, she offered him the diadem and bent before him her blond head, which was so well suited to that mystical jewel.

"Come, sit, crown me!"

And while he sought to unite with trembling hands the clasp of the gem among those marvelous blond curls, quivering and breaking into ripples of gold at every movement, she still with her bent head, lifted her smiling eyes to meet his look. And he answered with a resigned gentleness to the smile of those perilous blue eyes, the poor man who decided for the sake of desire to be deceived and who bought for himself a little joke life with—mock diamonds.—Translated For Short Stories From Italian of Haydee by E. C. Vass.

## Swedish Titles

One of the old customs is for people to indicate their business upon their visiting cards. You will receive the card of Lawyer Jones or Banker Smith or Notary Johnson or Music Professor Brown or Grocer (which means wholesale merchant) Ferguson or Geologist Thompson, and if a man ever held an office it is customary to indicate that fact upon his card. A burgomaster is always a burgomaster; a consul is always a consul and an alderman always an alderman. The prefixes "Hon." and "Sir" are seldom used, and the title, whether commercial or professional, is observed in conversation in the same way. It would sound rather queer for any one in the United States to ask, "Wholesale Merchant MacVeagh, will you kindly pass the butter?" or "Banker Hutchinson, will you accept Frazer Board of Trade Operator Jones to the table?" or "Director of Marine Insurance, I wish your good day?" but that is the custom in Sweden, and it is observed by children as well as grown people. A hapless child will approach a street, make a pretty little bow courtesy and say, "Good morning, Chief Justice of Supreme Court Smith," or "Good night, Representative in Congress Brown."

It is customary also for ladies to print their maiden names upon their visiting cards in smaller type under their married names, particularly if they have a pride of family and want people to know their ancestry. Observe the Record.

## Where London Drinks

Originality was evidently not one of the strong points of the godfathers of public houses, as the majority of names are born by any number from two to a dozen or more premises. Where, however, they have determined to get something fresh they have undoubtedly done so. The Antiquarian, Bag of Nails, Blade Bone, Bombay, Grab, David and Harry, Experienced Fowler, Flying Pan, Grave Marbles, Greenland, Fishery, Bent Day, Bash and Cocoa Tree, Old Blind Beggar and Ticket Porter are all names to be found within the metropolis, as well as the inexplicable combinations of Cock and Harp, Five Bells and Bladebone, French Horn and Artichoke, Crown and Cui, Bell and Mackerel, Cock and Neptune, Jolly Baller and Little Bell, Jet, Ship and Blue Bell, Ship and Shovel, Sun and Thirteen Cantons and the King's Head and Eight Bells. Lastly, there are three North poles, two World's Ends, a Finish and a Final—London Mail.

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Seaboard Air Line Railway to Florida. Cuba, Savannah, Camden, Southern Pine and Pinehurst.

Winter excursion tickets were placed on sale to resort points on this line in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, on October 15th, and will remain on sale during the season. Exceptionally low rates are in effect this year to Pinehurst and Southern Pines, N. C., Camden, S. C., Savannah, Ga., and all points in Florida and Cuba. To reach any of these points, the service of the Seaboard Air Line Railway, "Capital City Route," will be found the best and most attractive. In addition to the superior service now operated, it is announced that the Seaboard Air Line Railway will be placed in service on the Washington-Atlanta line about November 1st, and on the Florida line about January 1st, 1902. Following this the Florida & Metropolitan Limited will be inaugurated about January 15th, 1902, with sumptuous appointments and superior equipment, including dining and club cars, constituting it beyond a doubt the peer of any train in the world. The service of the Seaboard Air Line Railway to Cuba is most attractive. Its safe, car service and many other features present advantages commensurate to the favorable attention of all travelers.

See that your Winter Tourist tickets read via the Florida & West India Short Line, Seaboard Air Line Railway.

## MILITARY SERVICE DANCING ACADEMY

Mr. Cox, building, 1000 Broadway, New York City, has just received a large stock of military uniforms, and is now receiving orders for the same.

# JACK THE GIANT KILLER...AND HIS BABY

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Little Jack the Giant Killer. He fought the giant Gorgon, and when he killed him, he was a hero. And at once he became a hero.



Jack the Giant Killer and his baby. He fought the giant Gorgon, and when he killed him, he was a hero. And at once he became a hero.

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