

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

IN THE MOUNTAINS

Part 1

Next day Ann Veronica and Capes felt like newborn things. It seemed to them they could never have been really alive before, but only dimly anticipating existence. They sat face to face beneath an experienced-looking rucksack and a brand new portmanteau and a leather handbag, in the afternoon-boat train that goes from Charing Cross to Folkestone for Boulogne. They tried to read illustrated papers in an unconcerned manner and with forced attention, lest they should catch the leaping exultation in each other's eyes. And they admired Kent sedulously from the windows.

They crossed the Channel in sunshine and a breeze that just ruffled the sea to glittering scales of silver. Some of the people who watched them standing side by side thought they must be newly wedded because of their happy faces, and others that they were an old-established couple because of their easy confidence in each other.

At Boulogne they took train to Basle; next morning they breakfasted together in the buffet of that station, and thence they caught the

Interlaken express, and so went by way of Spies to Frutigen. There was no railway beyond Frutigen in those days; they sent their baggage by post to Kandersteg, and walked along the mule path to the left of the stream to that queer hollow among the precipices, Blau See, where the petrifying branches of trees lie in the blue deeps of an icy lake, and pine-trees clamber among gigantic boulders. A little inn flying a Swiss flag nestles under a great rock, and there they put aside their knapsacks and lunched and rested in the mid-day shadow of the gorge and the scent of resin. And later they paddled in a boat above the mysterious deeps of the See, and peered down into the green-blues and the blue-greens together. By that time it seemed to them they had lived together twenty years.

Except for one memorable school excursion to Paris, Ann Veronica had never yet been outside England. So that it seemed to her the whole world had changed--the very light of it had changed. Instead of English villas and cottages there were chalets and Italian-built houses shining white; there were lakes of emerald and sapphire and clustering castles, and such sweeps of hill and mountain, such shining uplands of snow, as she had never seen before. Everything was fresh and bright, from the kindly manners of the Frutigen cobbler, who hammered mountain nails into her boots, to the unfamiliar wild flowers that spangled the wayside. And Capes had changed into the easiest and jolliest companion in the world. The mere fact that he was there in the train alongside her, helping her, sitting opposite to her in the dining-car, presently sleeping on a seat within a yard of her, made her heart sing until she was afraid their

fellow passengers would hear it. It was too good to be true. She would not sleep for fear of losing a moment of that sense of his proximity. To walk beside him, dressed akin to him, rucksacked and companionable, was bliss in itself; each step she took was like stepping once more across the threshold of heaven.

One trouble, however, shot its slanting bolts athwart the shining warmth of that opening day and marred its perfection, and that was the thought of her father.

She had treated him badly; she had hurt him and her aunt; she had done wrong by their standards, and she would never persuade them that she had done right. She thought of her father in the garden, and of her aunt with her Patience, as she had seen them--how many ages was it ago? Just one day intervened. She felt as if she had struck them unawares. The thought of them distressed her without subtracting at all from the oceans of happiness in which she swam. But she wished she could put the thing she had done in some way to them so that it would not hurt them so much as the truth would certainly do. The thought of their faces, and particularly of her aunt's, as it would meet the fact--disconcerted, unfriendly, condemning, pained--occurred to her again and again.

"Oh! I wish," she said, "that people thought alike about these things."

Capes watched the limpid water dripping from his oar. "I wish they did," he said, "but they don't."

"I feel--All this is the rightest of all conceivable things. I want to tell every one. I want to boast myself."

"I know."

"I told them a lie. I told them lies. I wrote three letters yesterday and tore them up. It was so hopeless to put it to them. At last--I told a story."

"You didn't tell them our position?"

"I implied we had married."

"They'll find out. They'll know."

"Not yet."

"Sooner or later."

"Possibly--bit by bit.... But it was hopelessly hard to put. I said I knew he disliked and distrusted you and your work--that you shared all Russell's opinions: he hates Russell beyond measure--and that we couldn't possibly face a conventional marriage. What else could one say? I left him to suppose--a registry perhaps...."

Capes let his oar smack on the water.

"Do you mind very much?"

He shook his head.

"But it makes me feel inhuman," he added.

"And me...."

"It's the perpetual trouble," he said, "of parent and child. They can't help seeing things in the way they do. Nor can we. WE don't think they're right, but they don't think we are. A deadlock. In a very definite sense we are in the wrong--hopelessly in the wrong. But--It's just this: who was to be hurt?"

"I wish no one had to be hurt," said Ann Veronica. "When one is happy--I don't like to think of them. Last time I left home I felt as hard as nails. But this is all different. It is different."

"There's a sort of instinct of rebellion," said Capes. "It isn't anything to do with our times particularly. People think it is, but they are wrong. It's to do with adolescence. Long before religion and Society heard of Doubt, girls were all for midnight coaches and Gretna Green. It's a sort of home-leaving instinct."

He followed up a line of thought.

"There's another instinct, too," he went on, "in a state of suppression, unless I'm very much mistaken; a child-expelling instinct.... I wonder.... There's no family uniting instinct, anyhow; it's habit and sentiment and material convenience hold families together after adolescence. There's always friction, conflict, unwilling concessions. Always! I don't believe there is any strong natural affection at all between parents and growing-up children. There wasn't, I know, between myself and my father. I didn't allow myself to see things as they were in those days; now I do. I bored him. I hated him. I suppose that shocks one's ideas.... It's true.... There are sentimental and traditional deferences and reverences, I know, between father and son; but that's just exactly what prevents the development of an easy friendship. Father-worshipping sons are abnormal--and they're no good. No good at all. One's got to be a better man than one's father, or what is the good of successive generations? Life is rebellion, or nothing."

He rowed a stroke and watched the swirl of water from his oar broaden and die away. At last he took up his thoughts again: "I wonder if, some day, one won't need to rebel against customs and laws? If this discord will have gone? Some day, perhaps--who knows?--the old won't coddle and hamper the young, and the young won't need to fly in the faces of the old. They'll face facts as facts, and understand. Oh, to face facts! Gods! what a world it might be if people faced facts! Understanding! Understanding! There is no other salvation. Some day older people,

perhaps, will trouble to understand younger people, and there won't be these fierce disruptions; there won't be barriers one must defy or perish.... That's really our choice now, defy--or futility.... The world, perhaps, will be educated out of its idea of fixed standards.... I wonder, Ann Veronica, if, when our time comes, we shall be any wiser?"

Ann Veronica watched a water-beetle fussing across the green depths. "One can't tell. I'm a female thing at bottom. I like high tone for a flourish and stars and ideas; but I want my things."

Part 2

Capes thought.

"It's odd--I have no doubt in my mind that what we are doing is wrong," he said. "And yet I do it without compunction."

"I never felt so absolutely right," said Ann Veronica.

"You ARE a female thing at bottom," he admitted. "I'm not nearly so sure as you. As for me, I look twice at it.... Life is two things, that's how I see it; two things mixed and muddled up together. Life is

morality--life is adventure. Squire and master. Adventure rules, and morality--looks up the trains in the Bradshaw. Morality tells you what is right, and adventure moves you. If morality means anything it means keeping bounds, respecting implications, respecting implicit bounds. If individuality means anything it means breaking bounds--adventure.

"Will you be moral and your species, or immoral and yourself? We've decided to be immoral. We needn't try and give ourselves airs. We've deserted the posts in which we found ourselves, cut our duties, exposed ourselves to risks that may destroy any sort of social usefulness in us.... I don't know. One keeps rules in order to be one's self. One studies Nature in order not to be blindly ruled by her. There's no sense in morality, I suppose, unless you are fundamentally immoral."

She watched his face as he traced his way through these speculative thickets.

"Look at our affair," he went on, looking up at her. "No power on earth will persuade me we're not two rather disreputable persons. You desert your home; I throw up useful teaching, risk every hope in your career. Here we are absconding, pretending to be what we are not; shady, to say the least of it. It's not a bit of good pretending there's any Higher Truth or wonderful principle in this business. There isn't. We never started out in any high-browed manner to scandalize and Shelleyfy. When first you left your home you had no idea that I was the hidden impulse. I wasn't. You came out like an ant for your nuptial flight. It

was just a chance that we in particular hit against each other--nothing predestined about it. We just hit against each other, and here we are flying off at a tangent, a little surprised at what we are doing, all our principles abandoned, and tremendously and quite unreasonably proud of ourselves. Out of all this we have struck a sort of harmony.... And it's gorgeous!"

"Glorious!" said Ann Veronica.

"Would YOU like us--if some one told you the bare outline of our story?--and what we are doing?"

"I shouldn't mind," said Ann Veronica.

"But if some one else asked your advice? If some one else said, 'Here is my teacher, a jaded married man on the verge of middle age, and he and I have a violent passion for one another. We propose to disregard all our ties, all our obligations, all the established prohibitions of society, and begin life together afresh.' What would you tell her?"

"If she asked advice, I should say she wasn't fit to do anything of the sort. I should say that having a doubt was enough to condemn it."

"But waive that point."

"It would be different all the same. It wouldn't be you."

"It wouldn't be you either. I suppose that's the gist of the whole thing." He stared at a little eddy. "The rule's all right, so long as there isn't a case. Rules are for established things, like the pieces and positions of a game. Men and women are not established things; they're experiments, all of them. Every human being is a new thing, exists to do new things. Find the thing you want to do most intensely, make sure that's it, and do it with all your might. If you live, well and good; if you die, well and good. Your purpose is done.... Well, this is OUR thing."

He woke the glassy water to swirling activity again, and made the deep-blue shapes below writhe and shiver.

"This is MY thing," said Ann Veronica, softly, with thoughtful eyes upon him.

Then she looked up the sweep of pine-trees to the towering sunlit cliffs and the high heaven above and then back to his face. She drew in a deep breath of the sweet mountain air. Her eyes were soft and grave, and there was the faintest of smiles upon her resolute lips.

Part 3

Later they loitered along a winding path above the inn, and made love to one another. Their journey had made them indolent, the afternoon was warm, and it seemed impossible to breathe a sweeter air. The flowers and turf, a wild strawberry, a rare butterfly, and suchlike little intimate things had become more interesting than mountains. Their flitting hands were always touching. Deep silences came between them....

"I had thought to go on to Kandersteg," said Capes, "but this is a pleasant place. There is not a soul in the inn but ourselves. Let us stay the night here. Then we can loiter and gossip to our heart's content."

"Agreed," said Ann Veronica.

"After all, it's our honeymoon."

"All we shall get," said Ann Veronica.

"This place is very beautiful."

"Any place would be beautiful," said Ann Veronica, in a low voice.

For a time they walked in silence.

"I wonder," she began, presently, "why I love you--and love you so

much?... I know now what it is to be an abandoned female. I AM an abandoned female. I'm not ashamed--of the things I'm doing. I want to put myself into your hands. You know--I wish I could roll my little body up small and squeeze it into your hand and grip your fingers upon it. Tight. I want you to hold me and have me SO.... Everything. Everything. It's a pure joy of giving--giving to YOU. I have never spoken of these things to any human being. Just dreamed--and ran away even from my dreams. It is as if my lips had been sealed about them. And now I break the seals--for you. Only I wish--I wish to-day I was a thousand times, ten thousand times more beautiful."

Capes lifted her hand and kissed it.

"You are a thousand times more beautiful," he said, "than anything else could be.... You are you. You are all the beauty in the world. Beauty doesn't mean, never has meant, anything--anything at all but you. It heralded you, promised you...."

Part 4

They lay side by side in a shallow nest of turf and mosses among boulders and stunted bushes on a high rock, and watched the day sky deepen to evening between the vast precipices overhead and looked over

the tree-tops down the widening gorge. A distant suggestion of chalets and a glimpse of the road set them talking for a time of the world they had left behind.

Capes spoke casually of their plans for work. "It's a flabby, loose-willed world we have to face. It won't even know whether to be scandalized at us or forgiving. It will hold aloof, a little undecided whether to pelt or not--"

"That depends whether we carry ourselves as though we expected pelting," said Ann Veronica.

"We won't."

"No fear!"

"Then, as we succeed, it will begin to sidle back to us. It will do its best to overlook things--"

"If we let it, poor dear."

"That's if we succeed. If we fail," said Capes, "then--"

"We aren't going to fail," said Ann Veronica.

Life seemed a very brave and glorious enterprise to Ann Veronica that

day. She was quivering with the sense of Capes at her side and glowing with heroic love; it seemed to her that if they put their hands jointly against the Alps and pushed they would be able to push them aside. She lay and nibbled at a sprig of dwarf rhododendron.

"FAIL!" she said.

Part 5

Presently it occurred to Ann Veronica to ask about the journey he had planned. He had his sections of the Siegfried map folded in his pocket, and he squatted up with his legs crossed like an Indian idol while she lay prone beside him and followed every movement of his indicatory finger.

"Here," he said, "is this Blau See, and here we rest until to-morrow. I think we rest here until to-morrow?"

There was a brief silence.

"It is a very pleasant place," said Ann Veronica, biting a rhododendron stalk through, and with that faint shadow of a smile returning to her lips....

"And then?" said Ann Veronica.

"Then we go on to this place, the Oeschinensee. It's a lake among precipices, and there is a little inn where we can stay, and sit and eat our dinner at a pleasant table that looks upon the lake. For some days we shall be very idle there among the trees and rocks. There are boats on the lake and shady depths and wildernesses of pine-wood. After a day or so, perhaps, we will go on one or two little excursions and see how good your head is--a mild scramble or so; and then up to a hut on a pass just here, and out upon the Blumlis-alp glacier that spreads out so and so."

She roused herself from some dream at the word. "Glaciers?" she said.

"Under the Wilde Frau--which was named after you."

He bent and kissed her hair and paused, and then forced his attention back to the map. "One day," he resumed, "we will start off early and come down into Kandersteg and up these zigzags and here and here, and so past this Daubensee to a tiny inn--it won't be busy yet, though; we may get it all to ourselves--on the brim of the steepest zigzag you can imagine, thousands of feet of zigzag; and you will sit and eat lunch with me and look out across the Rhone Valley and over blue distances beyond blue distances to the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa and a long regiment of sunny, snowy mountains. And when we see them we shall at

once want to go to them--that's the way with beautiful things--and down we shall go, like flies down a wall, to Leukerbad, and so to Leuk Station, here, and then by train up the Rhone Valley and this little side valley to Stalden; and there, in the cool of the afternoon, we shall start off up a gorge, torrents and cliffs below us and above us, to sleep in a half-way inn, and go on next day to Saas Fee, Saas of the Magic, Saas of the Pagan People. And there, about Saas, are ice and snows again, and sometimes we will loiter among the rocks and trees about Saas or peep into Samuel Butler's chapels, and sometimes we will climb up out of the way of the other people on to the glaciers and snow. And, for one expedition at least, we will go up this desolate valley here to Mattmark, and so on to Monte Moro. There indeed you see Monte Rosa. Almost the best of all."

"Is it very beautiful?"

"When I saw it there it was very beautiful. It was wonderful. It was the crowned queen of mountains in her robes of shining white. It towered up high above the level of the pass, thousands of feet, still, shining, and white, and below, thousands of feet below, was a floor of little woolly clouds. And then presently these clouds began to wear thin and expose steep, deep slopes, going down and down, with grass and pine-trees, down and down, and at last, through a great rent in the clouds, bare roofs, shining like very minute pin-heads, and a road like a fibre of white silk-Macugnana, in Italy. That will be a fine day--it will have to be, when first you set eyes on Italy.... That's as far as we go."

"Can't we go down into Italy?"

"No," he said; "it won't run to that now. We must wave our hands at the blue hills far away there and go back to London and work."

"But Italy--"

"Italy's for a good girl," he said, and laid his hand for a moment on her shoulder. "She must look forward to Italy."

"I say," she reflected, "you ARE rather the master, you know."

The idea struck him as novel. "Of course I'm manager for this expedition," he said, after an interval of self-examination.

She slid her cheek down the tweed sleeve of his coat. "Nice sleeve," she said, and came to his hand and kissed it.

"I say!" he cried. "Look here! Aren't you going a little too far?"

This--this is degradation--making a fuss with sleeves. You mustn't do things like that."

"Why not?"

"Free woman--and equal."

"I do it--of my own free will," said Ann Veronica, kissing his hand again. "It's nothing to what I WILL do."

"Oh, well!" he said, a little doubtfully, "it's just a phase," and bent down and rested his hand on her shoulder for a moment, with his heart beating and his nerves a-quiver. Then as she lay very still, with her hands clinched and her black hair tumbled about her face, he came still closer and softly kissed the nape of her neck....

Part 6

Most of the things that he had planned they did. But they climbed more than he had intended because Ann Veronica proved rather a good climber, steady-headed and plucky, rather daring, but quite willing to be cautious at his command.

One of the things that most surprised him in her was her capacity for blind obedience. She loved to be told to do things.

He knew the circle of mountains about Saas Fee fairly well: he had been there twice before, and it was fine to get away from the straggling pedestrians into the high, lonely places, and sit and munch sandwiches

and talk together and do things together that were just a little difficult and dangerous. And they could talk, they found; and never once, it seemed, did their meaning and intention hitch. They were enormously pleased with one another; they found each other beyond measure better than they had expected, if only because of the want of substance in mere expectation. Their conversation degenerated again and again into a strain of self-congratulation that would have irked an eavesdropper.

"You're--I don't know," said Ann Veronica. "You're splendid."

"It isn't that you're splendid or I," said Capes. "But we satisfy one another. Heaven alone knows why. So completely! The oddest fitness! What is it made of? Texture of skin and texture of mind? Complexion and voice. I don't think I've got illusions, nor you.... If I had never met anything of you at all but a scrap of your skin binding a book, Ann Veronica, I know I would have kept that somewhere near to me.... All your faults are just jolly modelling to make you real and solid."

"The faults are the best part of it," said Ann Veronica; "why, even our little vicious strains run the same way. Even our coarseness."

"Coarse?" said Capes, "We're not coarse."

"But if we were?" said Ann Veronica.

"I can talk to you and you to me without a scrap of effort," said Capes; "that's the essence of it. It's made up of things as small as the diameter of hairs and big as life and death.... One always dreamed of this and never believed it. It's the rarest luck, the wildest, most impossible accident. Most people, every one I know else, seem to have mated with foreigners and to talk uneasily in unfamiliar tongues, to be afraid of the knowledge the other one has, of the other one's perpetual misjudgment and misunderstandings.

"Why don't they wait?" he added.

Ann Veronica had one of her flashes of insight.

"One doesn't wait," said Ann Veronica.

She expanded that. "I shouldn't have waited," she said. "I might have muddled for a time. But it's as you say. I've had the rarest luck and fallen on my feet."

"We've both fallen on our feet! We're the rarest of mortals! The real thing! There's not a compromise nor a sham nor a concession between us. We aren't afraid; we don't bother. We don't consider each other; we needn't. That wrapped life, as you call it--we've burned the confounded rags! Danced out of it! We're stark!"

"Stark!" echoed Ann Veronica.

Part 7

As they came back from that day's climb--it was up the Mittaghorn--they had to cross a shining space of wet, steep rocks between two grass slopes that needed a little care. There were a few loose, broken fragments of rock to reckon with upon the ledges, and one place where hands did as much work as toes. They used the rope--not that a rope was at all necessary, but because Ann Veronica's exalted state of mind made the fact of the rope agreeably symbolical; and, anyhow, it did insure a joint death in the event of some remotely possibly mischance. Capes went first, finding footholds and, where the drops in the strata-edges came like long, awkward steps, placing Ann Veronica's feet. About half-way across this interval, when everything seemed going well, Capes had a shock.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Ann Veronica, with extraordinary passion. "My God!" and ceased to move.

Capes became rigid and adhesive. Nothing ensued. "All right?" he asked.

"I'll have to pay it."

"Eh?"

"I've forgotten something. Oh, cuss it!"

"Eh?"

"He said I would."

"What?"

"That's the devil of it!"

"Devil of what?... You DO use vile language!"

"Forget about it like this."

"Forget WHAT?"

"And I said I wouldn't. I said I'd do anything. I said I'd make shirts."

"Shirts?"

"Shirts at one--and--something a dozen. Oh, goodness! Bilking! Ann Veronica, you're a bilker!"

Pause.

"Will you tell me what all this is about?" said Capes.

"It's about forty pounds."

Capes waited patiently.

"G. I'm sorry.... But you've got to lend me forty pounds."

"It's some sort of delirium," said Capes. "The rarefied air? I thought you had a better head."

"No! I'll explain lower. It's all right. Let's go on climbing now. It's a thing I've unaccountably overlooked. All right really. It can wait a bit longer. I borrowed forty pounds from Mr. Ramage. Thank goodness you'll understand. That's why I chucked Manning.... All right, I'm coming. But all this business has driven it clean out of my head.... That's why he was so annoyed, you know."

"Who was annoyed?"

"Mr. Ramage--about the forty pounds." She took a step. "My dear," she added, by way of afterthought, "you DO obliterate things!"

Part 8

They found themselves next day talking love to one another high up on some rocks above a steep bank of snow that overhung a precipice on the eastern side of the Fee glacier. By this time Capes' hair had bleached nearly white, and his skin had become a skin of red copper shot with gold. They were now both in a state of unprecedented physical fitness. And such skirts as Ann Veronica had had when she entered the valley of Saas were safely packed away in the hotel, and she wore a leather belt and loose knickerbockers and puttees--a costume that suited the fine, long lines of her limbs far better than any feminine walking-dress could do. Her complexion had resisted the snow-glare wonderfully; her skin had only deepened its natural warmth a little under the Alpine sun. She had pushed aside her azure veil, taken off her snow-glasses, and sat smiling under her hand at the shining glories--the lit cornices, the blue shadows, the softly rounded, enormous snow masses, the deep places full of quivering luminosity--of the Taschhorn and Dom. The sky was cloudless, effulgent blue.

Capes sat watching and admiring her, and then he fell praising the day and fortune and their love for each other.

"Here we are," he said, "shining through each other like light through a stained-glass window. With this air in our blood, this sunlight soaking us.... Life is so good. Can it ever be so good again?"

Ann Veronica put out a firm hand and squeezed his arm. "It's very good," she said. "It's glorious good!"

"Suppose now--look at this long snow-slope and then that blue deep beyond--do you see that round pool of color in the ice--a thousand feet or more below? Yes? Well, think--we've got to go but ten steps and lie down and put our arms about each other. See? Down we should rush in a foam--in a cloud of snow--to flight and a dream. All the rest of our lives would be together then, Ann Veronica. Every moment. And no ill-chances."

"If you tempt me too much," she said, after a silence, "I shall do it. I need only just jump up and throw myself upon you. I'm a desperate young woman. And then as we went down you'd try to explain. And that would spoil it.... You know you don't mean it."

"No, I don't. But I liked to say it."

"Rather! But I wonder why you don't mean it?"

"Because, I suppose, the other thing is better. What other reason could there be? It's more complex, but it's better. THIS, this glissade, would be damned scoundrelism. You know that, and I know that, though we might be put to it to find a reason why. It would be swindling. Drawing the pay of life and then not living. And besides--We're going to live, Ann

Veronica! Oh, the things we'll do, the life we'll lead! There'll be trouble in it at times--you and I aren't going to run without friction. But we've got the brains to get over that, and tongues in our heads to talk to each other. We sha'n't hang up on any misunderstanding. Not us. And we're going to fight that old world down there. That old world that had shoved up that silly old hotel, and all the rest of it.... If we don't live it will think we are afraid of it.... Die, indeed! We're going to do work; we're going to unfold about each other; we're going to have children."

"Girls!" cried Ann Veronica.

"Boys!" said Capes.

"Both!" said Ann Veronica. "Lots of 'em!"

Capes chuckled. "You delicate female!"

"Who cares," said Ann Veronica, "seeing it's you? Warm, soft little wonders! Of course I want them."

Part 9

"All sorts of things we're going to do," said Capes; "all sorts of times we're going to have. Sooner or later we'll certainly do something to clean those prisons you told me about--limewash the underside of life. You and I. We can love on a snow cornice, we can love over a pail of whitewash. Love anywhere. Anywhere! Moonlight and music--pleasing, you know, but quite unnecessary. We met dissecting dogfish.... Do you remember your first day with me?... Do you indeed remember? The smell of decay and cheap methylated spirit!... My dear! we've had so many moments! I used to go over the times we'd had together, the things we'd said--like a rosary of beads. But now it's beads by the cask--like the hold of a West African trader. It feels like too much gold-dust clutched in one's hand. One doesn't want to lose a grain. And one must--some of it must slip through one's fingers."

"I don't care if it does," said Ann Veronica. "I don't care a rap for remembering. I care for you. This moment couldn't be better until the next moment comes. That's how it takes me. Why should WE hoard? We aren't going out presently, like Japanese lanterns in a gale. It's the poor dears who do, who know they will, know they can't keep it up, who need to clutch at way-side flowers. And put 'em in little books for remembrance. Flattened flowers aren't for the likes of us. Moments, indeed! We like each other fresh and fresh. It isn't illusions--for us. We two just love each other--the real, identical other--all the time."

"The real, identical other," said Capes, and took and bit the tip of her little finger.

"There's no delusions, so far as I know," said Ann Veronica.

"I don't believe there is one. If there is, it's a mere wrapping--there's better underneath. It's only as if I'd begun to know you the day before yesterday or thereabouts. You keep on coming truer, after you have seemed to come altogether true. You... brick!"

Part 10

"To think," he cried, "you are ten years younger than I!... There are times when you make me feel a little thing at your feet--a young, silly, protected thing. Do you know, Ann Veronica, it is all a lie about your birth certificate; a forgery--and fooling at that. You are one of the Immortals. Immortal! You were in the beginning, and all the men in the world who have known what love is have worshipped at your feet. You have converted me to--Lester Ward! You are my dear friend, you are a slip of a girl, but there are moments when my head has been on your breast, when your heart has been beating close to my ears, when I have known you for the goddess, when I have wished myself your slave, when I have wished that you could kill me for the joy of being killed by you. You are the High Priestess of Life...."

"Your priestess," whispered Ann Veronica, softly. "A silly little priestess who knew nothing of life at all until she came to you."

Part 11

They sat for a time without speaking a word, in an enormous shining globe of mutual satisfaction.

"Well," said Capes, at length, "we've to go down, Ann Veronica. Life waits for us."

He stood up and waited for her to move.

"Gods!" cried Ann Veronica, and kept him standing. "And to think that it's not a full year ago since I was a black-hearted rebel school-girl, distressed, puzzled, perplexed, not understanding that this great force of love was bursting its way through me! All those nameless discontents--they were no more than love's birth-pangs. I felt--I felt living in a masked world. I felt as though I had bandaged eyes. I felt--wrapped in thick cobwebs. They blinded me. They got in my mouth. And now--Dear! Dear! The dayspring from on high hath visited me. I love. I am loved. I want to shout! I want to sing! I am glad! I am glad to be alive because you are alive! I am glad to be a woman because you are a

man! I am glad! I am glad! I am glad! I thank God for life and you. I thank God for His sunlight on your face. I thank God for the beauty you love and the faults you love. I thank God for the very skin that is peeling from your nose, for all things great and small that make us what we are. This is grace I am saying! Oh! my dear! all the joy and weeping of life are mixed in me now and all the gratitude. Never a new-born dragon-fly that spread its wings in the morning has felt as glad as I!"