

THE DESPERATE LOVER

By E. Phillips Oppenheim
ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK B. DRIEN

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE:

Palermo is the scene. There an exile, Leonardo di Marioni, has come for love of Adrienne Cartucco, who spurns him. He meets an Englishman, Lord St. Maurice, who falls in love with Adrienne. Leonardo sees his sister Margharita, who tells him his love for Adrienne is hopeless. But she pleads with her to arrange an accidental meeting, to say farewell, between Adrienne and him.

The consents. That night the Englishman is informed of an attempt being made to carry off Signorina Cartucco and Margharita, who are walking by brigands employed by a rejected suitor, on a lonely road. He rushes to the scene, and proves able to rescue the ladies.

Inflamed by the failure of his scheme, Leonardo sees Margharita, who shows him she knows that he was instigator of the attempted attack. The Englishman now sees Adrienne often. The Englishman, sitting in the hotel, finds a dagger at his feet. Looking up, he sees the Sicilian, and scents trouble.

HOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

He sighed, and his tearless eyes looked thoughtfully into the fire. Memories of other days were rising up and passing before him in swift procession. He saw himself and her, orphan brother and sister, wandering hand in hand over their beautiful island home, with the sea wind blowing in their faces, and the spirit of the mountains which towered around them entering into their hearts. Dear to them had been that home, dear that close and precious companionship. They had talked of the life which lay before them—rose-colored and joyous, pregnant with glorious opportunities and possibilities. For their island and the larger continent close at hand were convulsed at that time in certain patriotic efforts, the history of which has been written into the history of Europe, and no one desired more ardently to bear a hand in the struggle than young Leonardo di Marioni. Large hearted, romantic, and with an imagination easily fired, he was from the first a dreamer, and Margharita had ever been ready to share his dreams. The blood of kings was in their veins, to lead him on to great things; and she, Margharita, his sister, his beloved sister, should be the mistress of his destinies. Thus they had talked, thus they had dreamed, and now from the other side of the gulf he looked backward and saw in his own life, in the place of those great deeds which he had hoped to accomplish, one black, miserable chasm, and in her, forgetfulness of her high descent—for she had married this English merchant's son—and the grave. Ah! it was sad, very sad!

"Child!" he cried, "have you ever heard the story of my seizure and imprisonment? No, you have not. You shall hear it. You shall judge between me and them. Listen! When I was a young man, Italy seemed trembling on the verge of a revolution. The history of it all you know. You know that the country was honeycombed with secret societies, more or less dangerous. To one of these I belonged. We called our order the 'Order of the White Hyacinth.' We were all young, ardent and impetuous, and we imagined ourselves the apostles of the coming liberation. Yet we never advocated bloodshed; we never really transgressed the law. We gave lectures, we published pamphlets. We were a set of boy dreamers with wild theories—communists, most of us. But there was not one who would not have died to save our country the misery of civil war—not one, not one! Even women wore our flower, and were admitted to our Order. We pledged ourselves that our aims were bloodless. No society that ever existed was more harmless than ours. I say it! I swear it! Bear me witness, oh, my God, if what I say be not true!"

He was a strong man again. The apathy was gone; his reason was saved. He stood before this dark, tall girl, who, with clasped hands, was drinking in every word, and he spoke with all the swelling dignity of one who has suffered unjustly.

"By some means or other our society fell under the suspicion of the government. The edict went forth that we should be broken up. We heard the mandate with indignation. We were young and hot-blooded, and we were conscious that we had done no harm—that we were innocent of the things ascribed to us. We swore that we would carry on our society, but in secret. Before then, everything had been open; we had had a recognized meeting place, the public had attended our lectures, ladies had worn the white hyacinth openly at receptions and balls. Now, all was changed. We met in secret and under a ban. Still our aim was harmless. One clause alone was added to our rules of a different character, and we all subscribed to—'Vengeance upon traitors!' We swore it solemnly one to the other—'Vengeance upon traitors!'"

"Ah! if I had lived in those days I would have worn your flower at the court of the king," she cried, with glowing cheeks.

He pressed her hand in silence, and continued:

"As time went on, and things grew still more unsettled in the country, a species of inquisition was established. The eyes of the law were everywhere. They fell upon us. One night ten of us were arrested as we left our meeting place. We were all noble, and the families of my companions were powerful. I was looked upon as the ringleader; and upon me fell the most severe sentence. I was banished from Italian soil for ten years, with the solemn warning that death would be my lot if I ventured to return."

"It was atrocious!" He held up his hand. "Margharita, in those days I loved. Her name was Adrienne. She, too, was an orphan, and although she was of noble birth, she was poor, as we Marionis were poor also. She had a great gift, she was a singer; and, sooner than he depended upon her relatives, she had sung at concerts and operas, until all Europe knew of her fame. When I was exiled I was given seven days in which to take my farewell. I went to her, and declared my love. She did not absolutely reject me, nor did she accept me. She asked for time for consideration. I could give her none! I begged her to leave the country with me. Alas! she would not! Perhaps I was too passionate, too precipitate! It may have been so! I cannot say. I went away alone and left her. I plunged into gay life at Paris; I dwelt among the loneliest mountains of Switzerland; I endured the dullness of this cold gray London, and the dissipation of Vienna. It was all in vain! One by one they palled upon me. No manner of life, no change of scene, could cure me of my love. I fell ill, and I knew that my heart was breaking. You and I, Margharita, come of a race whose love and hatred are eternal!"

She crept into his arms; and he went on, holding her there. "Back I came at the peril of my life; content to die, if it were only at her feet. I found her cold and changed; blaming me even for my rashness, desiring even my absence. Not a word of pity to sweeten those weary days of exile; not a word of hope to repay me for all that I had risked to see her again. Soon I knew the reason—another love had stolen away her heart. There was an Englishman visiting her daily at Palermo; and she told me calmly one day that she loved him, and intended to become his wife. She forgot my long years of devoted service; she forgot her own unspoken yet understood promise; she forgot all that I had suffered for her; she forgot that her words must sound to me as the death warrant of all joy and happiness in this world. And she forgot, too, that I was a Marioni! Was I wrong, I wonder, Margharita, that I quarreled with him? You are a child, and yet my instinct tells me that you have a woman's judgment. Tell me, should I have stepped aside, and let him win her, without a blow?"

"You would have been a coward if you had!" she cried. "You fought him! Tell me that you fought him!"

"Margharita, you are a true daughter of your country!" the old man cried. "You are a Marioni! Listen! I insulted him. He declined to fight! I struck him across the face in a public restaurant, and forced him to accept my challenge. The thing was arranged. We stood face to face on the sand, sword in hand. The word had been given! His life was at my mercy; but mind, Margharita, I had no thought of taking it without giving him a fair chance. I intended to wait until my sword was at his throat, and then I would have said to him, 'Give up the woman whom I have loved all my life, and go unhurt!' He himself should have chosen. Was not that fair?"

"Fair! It was generous! Go on! Go on!"

"The word had been given; our swords were crossed. And at that moment, she, Adrienne, the woman whom I loved, stood before us. With her were Italian police come to arrest me. There was one letter alone of mine, written in a hasty moment, which could have been used in evidence against me at my former trial, and which would have secured for me a harsher sentence. That letter had fallen into her hands; and she had given it over to my bitter enemy, the chief of the Italian police. I was betrayed, betrayed by the woman whom I had braved all dangers to see! It was she who had brought them! she who—without remorse of hesitation—calmly handed me over to twenty-five years' captivity in a prison cell!"

Margharita freed herself from his arms. She was very pale, and her limbs were shaking. "But what a fire in those dark, cruel eyes!" "Go on! Go on!" she cried. "Let me hear the rest."

"Then, as I stood there, Margharita, love shriveled up, and hate reigned in its place. The memory of the oath of our Order flashed into my mind. A curtain seemed raised before my eyes. I saw the long narrow room of our meeting place. I saw the dark, faithful faces of my comrades. I heard their firm voices—'Vengeance upon traitors, vengeance upon traitors!' She, too, this woman who had betrayed me, had worn our flower upon her bosom and in her hair! She had come under the ban of that oath. Margharita, I threw my sword into the sea, and I raised my clasped hands to the sky, and I swore that, were it the last day of my life, the day of my release should see me avenged. Let them hide in the uttermost corners of the earth, I cried, that false woman and her English lover, still I would find them out, and they should taste of my vengeance! To my trial I went, with that oath written in my heart. I carried it with me into my prison cell, and day by day and year by year I repeated it to myself. It kept me alive; the desire of it grew into my being. Even now it burns in my heart!"

"During my captivity I was allowed to see my lawyer, and I made over by deed so much, to be paid every year to the funds of our Order at the London Branch, for our headquarters had been moved there after my first arrest. Day by day, I dreamed of the time when I should stand, a martyr in their cause, before my old comrades, and

demand of them the vengeance which was my due. I imagined them, one by one, grasping my hand, full of deep, silent sympathy with my long sufferings. I heard the oath which we had sworn—'Vengeance upon traitors, vengeance upon traitors!' It was the music which kept me alive, the hope which nourished my life!"

The dark eyes glowed upon him like stars, and her voice trembled with eagerness. "You have been to them? You will be avenged! Tell me that it is so!"

A little choking sob escaped from him. The numbness was passing away from his heart and senses. His sorrows were becoming human, and demanding human expression. "Alas, Margharita, alas!" he cried, with drooping head, "the bitterest disappointment of my life came upon me all unawares. While I have lain rotting in prison history has turned over many pages. The age for secret societies has gone by. The 'Order of the White Hyacinth' is no more—worse than that, its very name has been dragged through the dust. One by one the old members fell away; its sacred aims were forgotten. The story of its downward path will never be written. A few coarse, ignorant men meet in a pot-house, night by night, to spend the money I sent in beer and foul tobacco. That is the end of the 'Order of the White Hyacinth!'"

(Continued next week.)

ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH.
Rev. Thomas J. Brady, Pastor.

Next Sunday will be the fourth Sunday of Lent, with mass in Heppner church at 8:30, and a second mass in Ione at 10:30. On the fourth Sunday of March the pastor will go to Boardman instead of on the third as is usual, and he will have mass at 7:45 in Root's hall. The third Sunday will be the feast of St. Patrick who is the patron of the church and on that day there will be mass in the church at 9 o'clock instead of at 8:30. There will be no second mass anywhere on that Sunday.

On Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings there will be special devotion in the Heppner church at 7:30 p. m. Next Sunday evening the pastor will preach upon "May any one however holy or learned establish a Christian Church?" On each day of the week at 7:45 there will be mass in the church at 7:45. The pastor advises all to profit by the time of Lent so that they may be the better prepared to celebrate the triumphant resurrection of Christ from the dead on Easter Sunday.

Straw for Sale—Lexington, 5F32.

Pete Prophet and family will shortly move on to the George Sperry place just south of town, where Mr. Prophet expects to go into the business of raising turkeys and other poultry quite extensively. This place has been occupied during the past year or two by Glen Hayes.

Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Adams arrived at Heppner on Saturday from Portland where they have been residing during the winter months. They were on their way home at Hardman.

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