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"L'AMI DES MONTAGNES"
("FRIEND OF THE MOUNTAINS")

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To his fine old castle, standing high and isolated in the Pyrenees, Dr. Laurent Lucq brought his young wife, Passerine de Cazaubon. His mother, who lived with him at the castle, was suspicious of this alliance, but the doctor, living happily, far away from the world, and in the midst of the mountains for which he had almost passionate love, simply adored his young wife and was quite content to enjoy her society, even though she was full of the little vanities of youth. In company with her husband, Passerine employed the early days of their marriage in the exploration of the splendour of the mountains; a little task for her husband's sake, rendered laborious by the fact that she was of delicate constitution. One of their first objects of exploration was the Arriel Mine, to which a young, good-looking and very pleasant fellow, Marcel Puymaurens, had recently come as manager. The subtle appeal of youth drew Marcel and Passerine to each other, and the doctor's heart ached in the weeks which followed weeks, which somehow brought numerous meetings between the young people. Laurent could not fail to notice that his wife was losing her lassitude, that she had now become more eager for long walks in the mountains, and never grew tired so long as she was in the company of the young mine-manager. Eventually, the doctor made up his mind that the only way to save her was to take her to Paris, away from temptation. But in Paris, Passerine seemed to lose all interest in life, and she easily fell victim to a cold which attacked her lungs and confined her to bed. Almost driven to distraction, fearing that he might lose her, Laurent urgently solicited the help of a specialist. Like many of his colleagues in the medical profession, the doctor called in was as much a specialist of the heart and mind as of the lungs.

"You know", he said to Laurent, "there is really nothing to worry about. She has youth fighting for her, and her disease is certainly curable. Now in a recent case of a young woman whose health was very much worse than that of your wife, the parents confessed that their daughter had been fretting over a love affair. I advised them to let her marry the man she loved. And love cured her!. Discover that which will fire your wife with the enthusiasm oflife, and never mind whether it seems impossible or not, try to give her what she desires, and she will live." Easily spoken; the specialist little knew the agony which Laurent suffered in coming to a decision totake his advice. To keep Passerine in Paris or anywhere away from the love of Marcel which called her, was to condemn her to death; to give her this love which she desired meant that though she might live, she was forever lost to him. And he prayed for strength to accomplish the sacrifice.

So he took her back to the Pyrenees, where the atmosphere of love even more than the clear air of the mountains, speedily brought her back to health; but every day was torture for her husband.

There came an occasion when he was left alone with Marcel, left with an opportunity to get rid of his rival; he took it, and in the darkness of a cave, he pushed the young engineer over a precipice into the mountain torrent which ran below. It seemed, however, that Providence had ordained that he should suffer the full agony of his sacrifice; Marcel was miraculously saved, and he did not hesitate to tell Passerine that her husband had attempted to murder him. Passerine accused Laurent, and

with the fury of guilt and jealousy, the doctor threw her away from him. "You love this man; "well go to him".

For an hour or more, Laurent paced up and down with the fever of madness upon him; and then, suddenly picking up his hat and stick, he went out, moving quickly over the mountain paths, climbing upwards to the glaciers above. Higher and higher! Mad! The method in his madness to mount higher and higher until he had passed beyond human thought and destiny. But a just God ordained that his man should not thus pass out. The farther he went, the more difficult the madman found it to maintain a foothold; and presently he found his feet slipping, slipping, until he lost all control and went hurtling down to the snows below.

A party of guides on a peak across the valley had watched the madman's wanderings and had seen his fall. Quickly they went to the rescue. He was still living, but unconscious. They took him to a hut, and in searching for something to establish his identity they found this letter addressed to "Passerine" when she is thirty years of age."

"I do not wish to die", he had written, "before being certain that "she who was my wife keeps a good memory of me. One day she must know "the truth. I voluntarily united her to Marcel Puymaurens when I under- "stood that love could keep her alive. I was but a man! I hope Passerine " will forgive me, for I could not continue unto the end my role of "sacrifice which was above my strength. And let her think sometimes of "the Friend of the Mountains who loved her so much.-

Laurent LUCQ."

So Passerine came to see her husband, whilst her lover awaited her outside. Strange that Laurent should recover consciousness at the moment that she was being told that Marcel must speak to her immediately. The lover had indeed recognized that this was the critical moment - that her husband's helplessness might yet secure her affection. She went out to him with a determination to right a wrong. With a supreme effort, Laurent got up from his couch and managed to struggle to the door whence he could watch her. The sweat of agony poured from his embrace, and without knowing that her husband watched her, she told him that he must go away. For now and henceforth she belonged to the man who had striven so hard to bring her happiness - the Friend of the Mountains.

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