



The garden of survival,

Algernon Blackwood

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"[...]of bitter disappointment. The weapon, however, that she did use without hesitation was her singing. There was nothing special either in its quality or skill; it was a voice untrained, I believe, and certainly without ambition; her repertoire was limited; she sang folk-songs mostly, the simple love-songs of primitive people, of peasants and the like, yet sang them with such truth and charm, with such power and conviction, somehow, that I knew enchantment as I listened. This, too, she instantly divined, and that behind my compliments lay hid a weakness of deep origin she could play upon to her sure advantage. She did so without mercy, until gradually I passed beneath her sway. I will not now relate in detail the steps of my descent, or if you like it better, of my capture. This is a summary merely. So let me say in brief that her singing to the harp combined with the revelation of her physical beauty to lead me swiftly to the point where I ardently desired her, and that in this turmoil of desire I sought eagerly to find real love. There were times when I deceived myself most admirably; there were times when I plainly saw the truth. During the former I believed that my happiness lay in marrying her, but in the latter I recognised that a girl who meant nothing to my better self had grown of a sudden painfully yet exquisitely desirable. But even during the ascendancy of the latter physical mood, she had only to seat herself beside the harp and sing, for the former state to usurp its place, I watched, I listened, and I yielded. Her voice, aided by the soft plucking of the strings, completed my defeat. Now, strangest of all, I must add one other thing, and I will add it without comment. For though sure of its truth, I would not dwell upon it. And it[...]"

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