

**ILKA: THE CAPTIVE
MAIDEN, AND
OTHER STORIES**

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Ilka: The Captive Maiden, and Other Stories by S. G.

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S. G.

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MAIDEN, AND
OTHER STORIES**



"Receive your Bride from the Hands of your King!"

ILKA

THE CAPTIVE MAIDEN

And Other Stories

By S. G.

Author of "All's Well that Ends Well,"
"Dickie Winton,"



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ILKA: THE CAPTIVE MAIDEN.

AFTER many years of fighting there was a truce between the Hungarians and the wild heathen tribes to the south of the Szava, or river Save; and now at length King Salamon's brave knights found leisure to think of gentler subjects than war, and to talk of other matters than swords and lances.

Certainly it was of neither one nor the other that Bors Gyula,* the bravest of the brave, had been speaking this evening, as he turned his horse's head homeward. There was a bright smile on his face, and ever and anon he looked back to wave another farewell to the maiden who was watching his departure. He hoped soon to come and claim her as his bride; for the marriage-day was fixed, and he would no more return to a desolate home.

Yet still he had lingered, lover-like, till the last

* Julius.

moment; and still, though the last *légy boldog* (farewell) had been spoken, and he had mounted his horse, he could not make up his mind to set off. The horse, however, was more impatient than his master, and at length insisted on starting. And now the two were trotting away, Gyula, as we have said, still looking back and murmuring many an *Isten véled* (God be with you), as the form of his betrothed became more and more indistinct in the darkness. His mind was full of happy thoughts, and little he guessed how and when he and his bride Ilka * were destined to meet again.

* * * *

In a room in the grim fortress of Belgrade stood a young Greek officer, talking to and apparently trying to soothe a girl, whose vehement gestures and indignant exclamations seemed to show that this would be no easy task. Belgrade was at this time garrisoned by Greeks. There were Greeks in the town, Greek soldiers in the fortress; but the tall, graceful girl to whom Alexis was talking, with her flashing eyes, dark braided tresses, and picturesque dress, was evidently no Greek.

“So your general is going to try what hard measures will do?” she was saying. “It is no more than I expected, for I have long seen through him. But never mind; he may shut me up in his deepest

* Ilka = Helena.

dungeon, but he can't make me false to myself. You are grieved for me. Nay, don't trouble yourself. It isn't worth while; danger does but prove one's courage."

The young Greek looked at her sorrowfully yet admiringly as he answered, "If I could but help you, even at the sacrifice of my life! but it is in vain. My position is difficult. Forgive me for having been obliged to bring you this sad news; but what can I do? You know I am the general's adopted son. Gratitude binds me to him, for indeed he has been good to me; he has done everything for me—but then—"

"Well, what is the matter?" asked the maiden more gently, as she noted the troubled look on her companion's face.

"If you knew how often I have entreated the Lord of heaven to point out the way—to show me how to set you free!"

"Thanks, Alexis, for your good-will and sympathy; but indeed I do not wish to be free, if it can only be at the cost of a crime on your part. No! Niketas has been good to you; you must be faithful to him."

"But how can I bear to see you in prison, perhaps in chains?"

"Never mind! Whatever happens, I know there is One who feels for me; and besides, I hope—I am