



(Continued)

"To be snatched up again by some debt-ridden pimp who wants to escape his creditors," said Holles, his tone betraying at last some of the bitterness fermenting in his soul.

Albemarle stood sorrowfully regarding him. "This hits you hard, Randal, I know."

The Colonel recovered and forced a laugh.

"Pooh! Hard hits have mostly been my portion."

"I know," Albemarle paced to the window and back, his head sunk between his shoulders. Then he came to a halt before the Colonel. "Keep me informed of where you are lodged, and look to hear from me again as soon as may be. Be sure that I will do my best."

The Colonel's glance kindled again. It was a flicker of the expiring flame of hope.

"You really think that something else will offer?"

His grace paused before answering, and, in the pause, the sorrowful gravity of his face increased.

"To be frank with you, Randal, I hardly dare to think it. Chances for such as you are, as you understand, not . . . frequent. But the unexpected may happen sooner than we dare to hope. If it does, be sure I'll not forget you. Be sure of that."

Holles thanked him steadily, and rose to depart, his radiance quenched, despondency in every line of him.

Albemarle watched from under furrowed brows. As he reached the door the Duke detained him.

"Randal! A moment."

The Colonel turned and waited whilst slowly Albemarle approached him. His grace was deep in thought, and he hesitated before speaking.

"You . . . you are not urgently in need of money, I trust?" he said at last.

The Colonel's gesture and laugh conveyed a shamefaced admission that he was.

Albemarle's eyes considered him a moment still. Then, slowly, he drew a purse from his pocket. It was apparently a light purse. He unfastened it.

"If a loan will help you until . . ."

"No, no!" cried Holles, his pride aroused against accepting what amounted almost to alms.

Even so the repudiation was no more than half-hearted. But there was no attempt from Albemarle to combat it. He did not press the offer.

CHAPTER XI
A Woman Scorned

BACK ACHED TERRIBLY

Mrs. McMahon Tells How She Found Relief by Taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

Chatham, Ont.—"I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for a run-down condition after the birth of my baby boy. I had terrible pains and backache, and was tired and weak, not fit to do my work and care for my three little children. One day I received your little book and read it, and gave up taking the medicine I had and began taking the Vegetable Compound. I feel much better now and am not ashamed to tell what it has done for me. I recommend it to any woman I think feels as I do."—Mrs. J. R. McMAHON, 153 Harvey St., Chatham, Ont.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made from roots and herbs, has for nearly fifty years been restoring sick, ailing women to health and strength. It relieves the troubles which cause such symptoms as backache, painful periods, irregularities, tired, worn-out feelings and nervousness. This is shown again and again by such letters as Mrs. McMahon writes, as well as by one woman telling another. These women know, and are willing to tell others, what it did for them; therefore, it is surely worth your trial.

Women who suffer should write to the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., Cobourg, Ontario, for a free copy of Lydia E. Pinkham's Private Text-Book upon "Ailments Peculiar to Women."

COLONEL HOLES retraced his steps to the City on foot. A hackney-coach, such as that in which he had driven almost in triumph to the Cockpit, was no longer for him; nor yet could he submit to the expense of going by water now that the unexpected was all that stood between himself and destitution.

And yet the unexpected was not quite all. An alternative existed, though a very desperate one. There was the rebellion in which Tucker had sought fruitlessly hitherto to engage him. The thought of it began to stir in his dejected mind, as leaden-footed he dragged himself toward Temple Bar through the almost stifling heat which was making itself felt in London at the end of that month of May. Temptation urged him now, nourished not only by the circumstance that in rebellion lay his last hope of escaping starvation, but also by hot resentment against an inclement and unjust government that drove able soldiers such as himself into the kennels, whilst befriending the worthless minions who pandered to the profligacy of a worthless prince.

Vice, he told himself, was the only passport to service in this England of the restored Stuarts. Tucker and Rathbone were right. At least what they did was justified and hallowed by the country's need of salvation from the moral leprosy that was fastening itself upon it, a disease more devastating and deadly than this plague upon which the republicans counted to arouse the nation to a sense of its position.

He counted the cost of failure; but he counted it derisively. His life would be claimed. That was the stake he set upon the boards. But, considering that it was the only stake remaining him, why hesitate? What, after all, was this life of his worth that he should be tender of setting it upon a last throw with Fortune? Fortune favors boldness. Perhaps in the past he had not been bold enough.

Deep in his musing, he had reached St. Clement Danes, when he was abruptly aroused by a voice, harsh and warningly commanding.

"Keep your distance, sir!"

Checking, he looked round to the right, whence the order came.

He beheld a man with a pike, who stood before a padlocked door that was smeared with a red cross a foot in length, above which also in red was heavily daubed the legend:

LORD HAVE MERCY UPON US.

Taken thus by surprise, the Colonel shuddered as at the contact of something unclean and horrible. Hastily he stepped out into the middle of the unpaved street, and, pausing there a moment, glanced up at the closed shutters of the infected house.

Albemarle was frowning. He pondered a moment; but only because it was ever his way to move slowly. Then he gently shook his head and pursed his heavy lips.

"I have also to consider, your grace, whether Sir Harry is eminently suitable to the office, and, to be quite frank, and with all submission, I must say that I cannot think so."

Buckingham was taken aback. He stared haughtily at Albemarle.

"I don't think I understand," he said.

Albemarle fetched a sigh, and proceeded to explain himself.

"For this office—one of considerable responsibility—we require a soldier of tried experience and character. Sir Harry is no doubt endowed with many commendable qualities, but at his age it is impossible that he should have gained the experience without which he could not possibly discharge to advantage the onerous duties which would await him. Nor is that the only obstacle, your grace. I have not only chosen my man—and such a man as I have described—but I have already offered, and he has already accepted, the commission. So that post can no longer be considered vacant."

"But the commission was signed only last night by His Majesty—signed in blank, as I have reason to know."

"True. But I am none the less pledged. I am expecting at any moment now, the gentleman upon whom the appointment is already conferred."

Buckingham did not dissemble his annoyance. "May one inquire his name?" he asked, and the question was a demand.

Albemarle hesitated. He realized the danger to Holles in naming him at this unfortunate juncture. "His name would not be known to your grace. He is a comparatively obscure soldier, whose merits, however, are fully known to me, and I am persuaded that a fitter man for the office could not be found. But something else will, no doubt, offer within a few days, and then . . ."

Buckingham interrupted him arrogantly.

It is not a question of something else, your grace, but of this, I have already obtained His Majesty's sanction. If your grace requires more explicit instruction I shall be happy to obtain you His Majesty's commands in writing."

Albemarle was checkmated. He sat there grim and impassive as if he were carved of stone. But his mind was a seething cauldron of anger. It was always thus. The places of trust, the positions demanding experienced heads and able hands that England might be served to the best advantage by her most meritorious sons, were constantly being flung away upon the worthless parasites that flocked about Charles's lecherous Court. And he was the more angered here, because his hands were tied against resistance by the very identity of



HE WAVED THE POP TO THE SECOND OF THE TWO CHAIRS.

the man he was appointing. Had it been a question of any other man of Holles's soldierly merit, but of such antecedents as would permit the disclosure of his name, he would clap on his hat and step across to the palace to argue the matter with the King. And he would know how to prevail against the place-seeking insolence of Buckingham. But, as it was, he was forced to realize that he could do none of this without perhaps dooming Holles and bringing heavy censure fruitlessly upon himself.

"Oddfish!" the King would cry. "Do you tell me to my face that you prefer the son of a regicide to the friend of my friend?" And what should he answer then?

He lowered his eyes. The commission which was the subject of this discussion lay there on the table before him, the space which the name of Randal Holles was intended to occupy still standing blank. He was defeated, and he had best, for the sake of Holles as much as for his own, accept the situation without further argument.

He took up a pen, dipped it, and drew the document to him.

"Since you have His Majesty's authority, there can be, of course, no further question."

Rapidly, his quill scratching and spluttering across the sheet, he filled in the name of Sir Harry Stanhope, bitterly considering that he might as profitably have filled in Nell Gwynn's. He dusted the thick writing with pounce, and proffered

the document to him.

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it without another word. But his looks were heavy.

Buckingham rose, smiling, and Sir Harry bounced up with him, smiling also. For the first and last time in the course of that short interview Sir Harry spoke.

"Your grace's devoted servant," he professed himself, bowing and smirking. "I shall study to discharge my office creditably, and to allay any qualms my youth may leave in your grace's mind."

"And youth," said Buckingham, smiling, to reassure Albemarle, "is a fault that time invariably corrects."

Albemarle rose slowly to his feet, and the others bowed themselves out of his presence.

Then he sat down again heavily, took his hat in his hands, and softly loosed an oath.

Holles came an hour later, radiant with expectation, a gay, youthful-looking, commanding figure in his splendid red coat, to be crushed by the news that proved him Fortune's fool again, as ever.

But he bore it well on the face of him, however deeply the iron was thrust into his soul. It was Albemarle who inveighed in most unmeasured terms against the corrupt influence of the Court and the havoc it was working.

"It needed a man for this office and they have constrained me to give it to a fribble, a dolly in breeches, a painted dawcock."

Holles remembered Tucker's denunciations of the present government and began to realize at last how right he was and how justified he and his associates might be of their conviction that the people were ready to rise and sweep this Augean stable clean.

Albemarle was seeking to comfort him with fresh hope. No doubt something else would offer soon. It was the first that he had seen; for although he had come this way a week ago, when the plague was already active in the neighborhood, yet it was then confined to Butcher's Row on the north side of the church and to the mean streets that issued thence. To find it thus upon the main road between the City and Whitehall was to be rendered unpleasantly conscious of its spread. And, as he now pursued his way with instinctively quickened steps, he found his thoughts thrust more closely than ever upon the uses which the revolutionaries could make of this dread pestilence.

Much brooding in his disturbed state of mind distorted his mental vision, so that he came presently to adopt the view that this plague was a visitation from Heaven upon a city abandoned to ungodliness. Heaven, it followed, must be on the side of those who labored to effect a purifying change.

The end of it was that, as he looked toward Paul's, his resolve was taken. That evening he would seek Tucker and throw in his lot with the republicans.

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HE BEHELD A MAN WITH A PIKE BEFORE A PADLOCKED DOOR.

Coming into Paul's Yard, he found a considerable crowd assembled before the western door of the Cathedral. It was composed of people of all degrees: merchants, shopkeepers, prentices, horseboys, scavengers, rogues from

(Continued on Page 3)

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