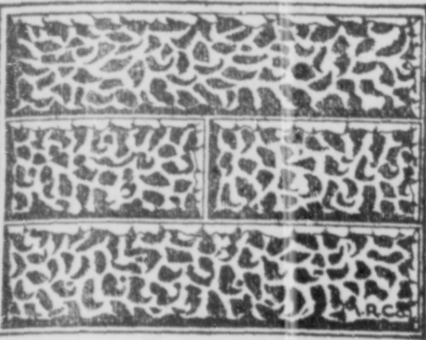


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**RIGHTED AT LAST**

BY MARY CECIL HAY

Author of "The Arundel Motto," "Nora's Love Test," "Back to the Old Home," Etc.

(Continued.)

"What information, may I ask, sir?"  
"Any information," rejoined Lawrence, with a last effort of humility, "with which you may favor me about my cousin, Gabriel Myddelton."

"When I have information which I wish to confide to you, I will bring it to you myself. I will not trouble you to seek it so urgently."

"You offered, a few minutes ago," observed the lawyer, seizing on his last faint hope of a stray advantage, "to make inquiries of your friends in South America."

"I will do so with pleasure. By what name may I inquire for your cousin?"

"By what name?" replied Lawrence, gazing half stupefied into the cool, quizzical face above him, and wondering how it was that every word this man uttered went to strengthen his suspicion, yet every glance and tone to weaken it.

"Yes, that was my question, sir," returned Royden, quietly. "For it is not customary, I believe, even in the wilds of an unpopulated country, for a condemned criminal, who has by stratagem escaped the grip of English justice, to travel under his branded name. By what name may I inquire for your cousin?"

"You know I cannot tell!" blurted the lawyer, impotently. "A nice mockery your offer is—you had better have made none."

"Then I will withdraw it," said Royden, glancing at the door as a footstep approached it from without.

"Of one thing I am perfectly sure," stammered Mr. Haughton, looking at his hat, as if about to put it on, but making no movement toward the door: "no gentleman would speak as you have done to-day of Gabriel Myddelton and his acts, unless he had personally known something of Gabriel and those deeds of his."

"Come in."

The knock upon the door, and Mr. Keith's leisurely answer to it, alone had broken the pause which followed the lawyer's words.

"A letter, sir."

Pierce came up to his master with his noiseless step, and the lawyer hesitated in his intention to leave, watching Mr. Keith's hand as it took the letter from the tray the servant held.

"Waiting?"

"No, sir—sent by a messenger belonging to Kinbury."

Lawrence Haughton's eyes—sharpened not only by years of practice, but by the distrust which every moment grew upon him—rested greedily upon the envelope which Royden held, without attempting to open; but they rested there in vain, for all their keenness; and one fancy, which had been hovering tauntingly about him, laid hold of Mr. Haughton's mind now as a mortifying conviction. Below all the quiet, rather assumed ease of the young man before him, lay a will far stronger than his own, a power more dominant; and—above all humiliating to the lawyer, who built so great pretensions on his reserve—a sight so much keener, and a knowledge so much truer, that his motives and suspicions had all been laid bare in this interview, which had shown him nothing.

There was no sign of Royden's opening the letter, and Lawrence had no excuse to stay longer.

"Good-morning, Mr. Keith," he said, and made rather an unnecessary show of offering his hand.

"Good-morning, sir," said Royden, with a slight unconcerned bow.

Before the lawyer had reached the vestibule of the hotel, a sudden resolution formed itself from the jarring discords of mistrust and jealousy which swayed his mind. Slowly he retraced his steps, and, following immediately on the slightest signal of his approach

which courtesy allowed, he entered Mr. Keith's room once more.

It was empty, but Mr. Haughton thought he would wait for a few moments, so he sauntered over to the hearth, and, as he framed to himself the speech intended for Royden's ear, he stood with his eyes lowered.

Suddenly and swiftly a change came into his face. Stooping upon the rug, and stretching forth his cautious white fingers, he took something from the grate, and placed this something within the crown of the hat he carried.

"I see how it is," he said to himself, in self-congratulation; "he threw it there to burn, little guessing that the ashes would tell secrets. I think I will not stay now."

But Mr. Haughton had, with miraculous suddenness, to repress his smile of delight, and once more change his tactics, when, as he turned to leave the room, he encountered Royden Keith.

"I returned," he said, with a little unusual suavity in his harsh tones, "to beg that, if you think it dangerous in any way to move in the matter of discovering Gabriel Myddelton's name and place of concealment, you will not for a moment think of doing so."

"Danger to himself or to me?" inquired Royden, in a tone of quiet irony.

The old bewilderment was falling upon Lawrence Haughton's brain once more, but there was now the pleasant consciousness of what he carried in his hat.

"Your question is odd," he said, with a curious smile. "For whom could there be danger, but for the felon himself?"

"Oh! that is the law, is it? Danger only for the felon himself. That's well. Then listen, Mr. Haughton. I did not, as you are quite aware, promise you help in discovering his name and hiding-place; your return, therefore to insinuate danger to him was unnecessary. But your courteous and well-disguised insinuation of danger to myself has given a zest to the idea to for me, and I will now promise you to do what you desire, and be myself the one to bring you and Gabriel Myddelton face to face."

"If you do, you know the consequence!" said Lawrence, between his teeth.

"The consequence will naturally be the carrying out of that long-delayed sentence of the law."

"Certainly. Though as I said before," added Lawrence, hastily, "if I knew him to be in a distant country, trying to be a better man, I would wish to offer him help."

"You are generous," remarked Royden, dryly; and then the two men separated.

"I know nothing more than I knew when I went in," muttered the lawyer to himself, as he descended the stairs for the second time; "but still I have something now which may be a proof."

Entering his own office, without having addressed either of his clerks on his way, Mr. Haughton turned the key in the door behind him. Then taking his usual seat before his writing-table, he cautiously drew the burned paper from his hat. It was but a small torn piece which he had rescued, and it was burned perfectly black, but upon it he could read in white two written words.

"Science would explain this in a moment," smiled Lawyer Haughton, locking the paper carefully in a private drawer, "and tell why, as that peculiar paper burned to tinder, without entirely crumbling away, and its whiteness turned to blackness, the ink should, on the contrary, turn from black to white, and fulfil its mission still, by forming the words in its strong contrast. But I do not need it explained by science. Here the words stand, and that is enough for me. When the time comes, they may be proof enough; and in the meantime they are safe here."

CHAPTER XIII.

In spite of Mrs. Payte's sharp rebukes and muttered grumbings, Honor Craven acted upon the permission given her and spent much time at East Cottage, soothing and cheering as far as possible the wakeful hours of the invalid whose only constant companion seemed so harsh and unfeeling. Yet those visits to the cottage were by no means easy of accomplishment for Honor. Far from being her own mistress, to spend there what time she would, and come and go as she chose, there were continual difficulties put in her way, both by her guardian and her sister. Lawrence selfishly forbade her to be out after six o'clock, when he himself came home; and Miss Haughton considered that there were a hundred things she might be doing more useful and sensible than "dancing attendance" on a perfect stranger.

"Why don't you mend your stockings?" she would inquire, when Honor, her morning duties over, would beg permission to go.

"They don't want mending, Jane."

"Well, Phoebe's always want double mending; so why don't you help her?" would be the grumbling remark.

"Oh! let me go—do Jane; Mrs. Disbrow is very ill," the girl would plead, without uttering one impatient word at Jane's proposal, though she knew that Phoebe's mending always fell entirely upon her own quick fingers.

If at last she did succeed in getting off, she must—however much she felt herself of use at the cottage—be home again for the six o'clock dinner, or incur her guardian's moody displeasure, and in so doing bring down upon herself a perfect torrent of tears from Phoebe, and Miss Haughton's blackest look and grimmest words. So this new task which Honor had taken upon herself was not so easy a one as Mrs. Payte seemed to fancy, when she would meet the girl's bright face at the cottage window, and ask her sharply how many of her day's duties she had left undone. The answer always had been so truthful that even this skeptical old lady could not doubt the truth of the one which at last took the place of all others—

"None left undone to-day, Mrs. Payte. I was up early, and everything is done."

Sometimes, receiving this bright answer, Mrs. Payte caught herself smiling into the girl's earnest eyes—but only sometimes. The answer generally met with a grunt of skeptical surprise, and, but that Honor looked for no thanks, her heart might have grown idle or rebellious in this task. But it never did; and when a month was gone, and October was drawing to its close, Honor was still fulfilling this one duty, her soft voice and step untrifling, and her gentle hands unflinching in their prompt and loving service.

One afternoon, when Honor reached the cottage—Miss Haughton had kept her at home all the morning darning table-cloths with Phoebe, whose propensity was to keep a novel under her work, and imbibe its contents surreptitiously while her younger cousin worked—she found Theodora Trent with Mrs. Payte in the cottage parlor. Miss Trent had made her duty call as brief as possible, and now was relieved to feel that the ten minutes were over, and she might depart.

(To be continued.)

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