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CHAPTER XIII.

"To-day. Why, Myra, how could I go, with the Grange plant on to-morrow night—you are forgetting that."

"Yes, I forgot that. Good-bye, George."

"Good-bye, Myra; take care of yourself, and be careful."

Myra left the vault, went along the passage, and reached the fragment of steps that led to the opening through which the robbers effected their entrance and exit.

She pushed the qualms of fear and pain from her; work had to be done—work from which many a man would have shrunk, entailing as it did, so much anxiety, care and dread of discovery.

In Myra's savage, honest breast dwelt no knowledge that the errand on which she was bound was a sin; she only remembered what lay before her to do—her trust to her companions, her loyalty to them all—and for a time her wounded love was banished.

Count Jura peered after the girl's retreating figure till it disappeared.

"She's gone, thank Heaven!" he exclaimed in accents of relief. "Myra is becoming a nuisance, Dame Burden; you must keep her in check, or look out for another berth."

"She's only a bit foolish, George, quickly answered the old woman. I'll speak to her, and tell her you ain't pleased with her. Lor', she ain't a bit like me—she takes after her father."

"Well, I can't be worried with her foolishness," returned the count, "and that's an end of it. She's handsome, and would please many a man—in fact, Moses wants to marry her. I expect he'll say as much to her when he sees her. I have given Sam a letter to give her just when she starts—it is to Moses, telling him to keep her in town till the day after to-morrow."

"But can he do it?" asked Dame Burden eagerly. "you know what Myra is."

"I think he'll succeed. Now go and look after her," nodding her head towards the inner chamber; "I am going to have breakfast, and—here, perhaps you'd better hand me back that ring—it may be safer!"

"Who's to see it here, George?" the old woman exclaimed. "Don't take it from me! I've worked hard and well for you, and I don't ask much payment; these dingy old vaults can't spit on us."

"All right," said the count; "you'll be leaving the dingy vaults in two or three days, and then you can sport your ring to your friends at—you know where."

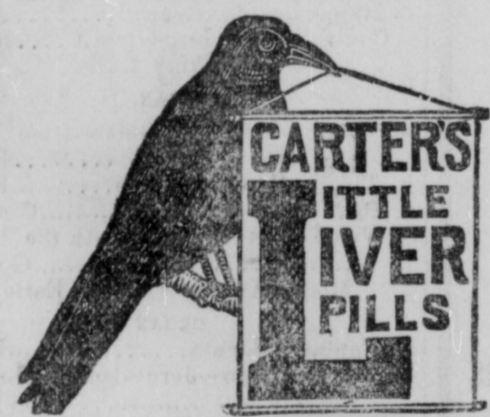
"And right glad I shall be," grumbled Dame Burden, busying herself with his breakfast; "these ruins ain't to my fancy; I've a horror we shall be trapped in them like rats, one of these days!"

"Don't be a fool," exclaimed the man angrily, turning a shade paler. "These ruins, as you know, are supposed to be haunted; none of the villagers would come near to save their lives, and as to the big folk, there is nothing to bring them except now and again on a very rare occasion—there's no one to invite them, Dame Burden; you forget we are not hospitable."

The old woman laughed.

"But who does own them, George?" she asked.

"I did hear, but I've forgotten—some old man who is traveling abroad; we've nothing to do with him, and he isn't



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(Continued.)

likely to come here, as he hates the whole country and the very name of the ruins. Now go to her; she may be awake; take her some of those shawls, and look after her well. You understand?" and Count Jura turned away.

Dame Burden nodded her head and shuffled towards the inner room where Alice lay, glancing ever and anon at her dirty hand, with its glittering jewel shining in the gloom like a glorious star.

Alice moved restlessly as she stood near her. The old woman moistened her lips with water and smoothed back the masses of hair from the flushed face; then, not understanding the indistinct murmurings that fell from the girl's lips, she sat down beside the couch and watched her diamond with a greedy look on her sinister face.

From this she fell into a doze, then into a sound slumber, which lasted for many minutes, while Alice tossed and moaned in the burning delirium that had seized her for the time.

She had no knowledge of where she was, she had no clearness of recollection; her brain was occupied with strange and horrible fancies, that racked her mind and filled her with a sense of vague and unfathomable terror.

Count Jura was too much occupied at first to notice the silence; he was talking quickly and earnestly to Paul Ross. The latter was pale and gloomy.

"I did not think you a coward, Paul," the count said with a sneer, after listening to the other speaking for a time.

"Nor am I," answered Paul with an ugly look passing over his face. "I am careful—that is all."

"Careful!" "Yes, George; something warns me we ought to cry off this Grange affair. You don't know Geoffrey Armistead—I do. He is a cat that smells out the mice when least expected. I dread him; besides, what have we to get from there? Armistead's home is not Darrell Castle, remember. We have enough plate to stock a ship."

"We can't have too much," returned the count; "My mind is made up, Paul; we have everything arranged. I shall go on."

"Then go yourself!" exclaimed Paul Ross roughly. "for I will not be in it!"

"I think you will, Paul." Count Jura rose and put his hand on the other's shoulder, while a cold glitter came into his eyes.

Paul shifted the hand from his shoulder. "I will not," he answered sullenly.

"Then I shall inform Dan Lowry when I go up to town that the man he is seeking, the man who ruined and murdered his wife, is none other than P—"

"Eush—for God's sake, hush! I will go, curse you! May you never be in such a push yourself! Let the plant go on, and if the worst does come, Master George, I give you fair warning, you shall stand in the dock with me—I swear it!"

The count simply shrugged his shoulders. "Don't let your secret carry away all your wisdom, mon ami," he said with a smile, as he lit a cigar; "the plant will not fail. And even if it does," he thought hurriedly, "I shall be near at hand."

"Now for the diamonds," observed Paul after a long pause; "what is to become of them?"

"They are mine," Count Jura returned quietly; "I thought that was settled last night. The plate, or the greater part of it, is yours. Myra has gone with it to Moses already; before night I expect it will be melted down."

"And the other treasure?" asked Paul with a sneer; "is she yours too?"

"She is," answered the count with knit brows; "pray, have you any objections on that point?"

Paul made no reply, but rose to his feet. "Do you come with us to-night? he asked sullenly.

"Of course," returned the other carelessly; then as Paul slouched out between the curtains, he glanced after him with a black frown.

"To-night!" he muttered; "to-night will see us separated for good and all, my friend. I'm growing sick of your sulky ways; I leave you all. It seems like a dream of bliss, the vision of a sunny land—after all these gloomy vaults, sunshine, flowers and love!"

He threw away the cigar he was smoking; a flush was on his face. "She has wound herself round my heart like strings of iron, yet with a golden touch. I never thought the woman lived that could move me so. She stuns me now, but once away, alone, in my power, and all will go well. We shall then reign in a heaven of love and happiness."

He moved towards the inner room and whistled softly. Dame Burden awoke with a start. "Get everything ready, put my baz-

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W. D. MCKAY

"gaze together," he said swiftly; "we start to-night." The old woman rubbed her eyes. Myra's commands came back to her. "She is not able to move, George," she whispered; "she is in a fever." The count's face grew dark. "Curse it! We must go—delay is dangerous; but how is it to be managed?" He thought to himself for a few moments, then said: "She is only temporarily ill from the effects of the chloroform; it will not hurt her to be moved." "But will she go?" asked Dame Burden cunningly. "I have a plan. Listen." He spoke a few words to her in a quick, low voice, then with a gesture of command led her.

CHAPTER XIV.

The afternoon was growing dusk when Lady Alice woke to consciousness. She was weak and trembling; her hands were burning, her throat parched.

She saw the cup which Myra had placed beside her, and grasping it, drank eagerly of the water.

Then she lay down, and let her eyes wander round. Again her fear began to grow. She peered into the gloom and uttered a faint shriek as the curtain was lifted and Dame Burden appeared.

"Ah, you've waked up, dearie," said the old woman soothingly. "That's right."

(To be Continued.)

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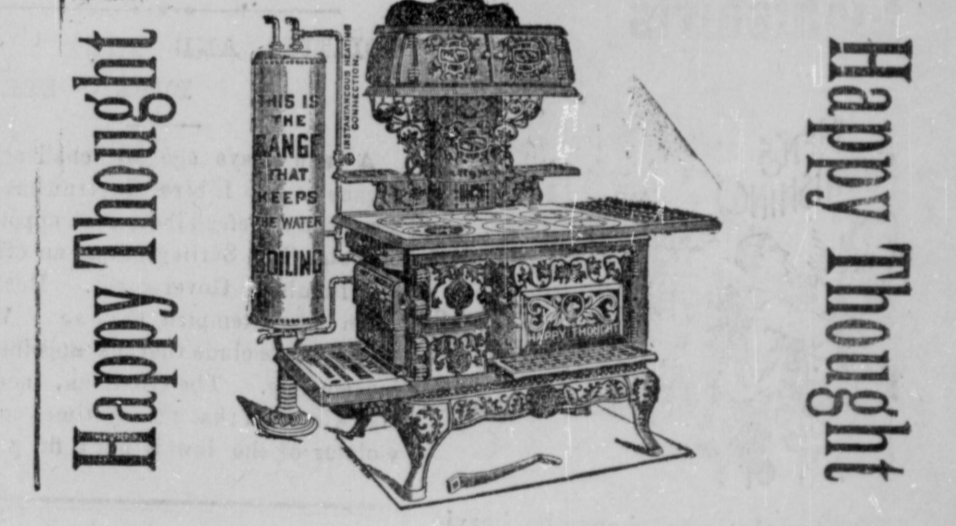
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