

TAKE

At length it came to an anchor at a distance from the shore, and the occupant of the boat appeared to be engaged in fishing. Lady Chellis watched him eagerly for some minutes. Once or twice he seemed to cast a careless glance in the direction of the lone stone house, and the captive became inspired with the idea of appealing to him for aid.

The infinite dismay of Lady Chellis, walked quickly in the direction she had indicated as that which had been taken by her uncle. She watched his stooping, ungainly figure until it had disappeared beyond the rocks, almost doubting the evidence of her senses. Surely this strange fisherman could not be Sir Hugh. He could not have traced her to her lonely prison after the precautions that had been taken by Mr. Wilmer. He could not have so thoroughly disguised himself. And yet it must be—it was—her husband.

The blessed conviction, coming with full force upon her mind, deprived her of all strength, and she sat down deathly pale, her heart beating with great, strong throbs, like the quick, regular blows of a hammer. Meanwhile the fisherman walked up the shore for a little distance, looking carefully about him as he went, and at length encountered Mr. Wilmer, who was resting in a niche among the rocks, idly enjoying the sun.

The latter looked up as the boatman stopped, and uttered an exclamation of surprise. "What do you want here?" he asked. "Don't you know, my good man, that you are intruding upon private grounds?" "I want to see you, Mr. James Wilmer," responded the pretended fisherman, in quick, stern tones. "You see I know you in spite of your disguise. You have been a long and hard chase, but I've found you at last."

Mr. Wilmer was paralyzed at this strange address and the manner of the new-comer. "Who—who are you?" he gasped. "The pretended fisherman took off his cap, and with one quick touch removed both wig and beard. It was Sir Hugh Chellis's face that met the gaze of his astonished enemy—stern, glowing, and commanding.

CHAPTER XXV. "I FEEL AS IF I HAD A HOME AT LAST." We'll live together like wretched slaves, Circling our souls and loves in one another; We'll spring together and we'll bear one another's burden, One joy, shall make us smile and one grief mourn, One grief with us, and one hour of death's shade close our eyes and one grave make us happy.

The astounded Mr. Wilmer trembled upon the rocks before Sir Hugh Chellis in a subject terror, uttering his name in a hoarse and almost inaudible whisper. He had just been congratulating himself upon the success of his retreating scheme, and promising himself the speedy submission of his captive to the terms exacted of her. Imagine, then, the black gulf of despair into which his soul was plunged by this sudden and unlooked-for appearance.

The young baronet followed up the impression he had made by producing a small silver-mounted pistol, which he held unpleasantly near the head of the discomfited schemer. He then turned and looked seaward, beckoning with his hand. A small fishing boat, containing two men, had within the last half hour been drawing near the shore, favored by the wind, which had shifted, and it now crowded on every additional stitch of sail, standing in for the little cove where Sir Hugh was waiting.

In a few moments the boat had gained the land, and its two occupants, rough, honest fishermen, sprang out and hurried toward the baronet. Then Sir Hugh spoke again, with a quiet smile and air of authority that deepened the misery of the wretch before him. "Mr. Wilmer," he said, "you have stolen my young wife from me, and for purposes of vengeance or because you wished to exact a heavy ransom for her. I have tracked you here, and now demand my wife at your hands."

The two fishermen stood behind the baronet, and looked at Mr. Wilmer with glances so menacing that he shivered, and his teeth almost chattered. "You see that I am not without friends," said Sir Hugh pointed to the two men, to one of whom the boat in which he had entered the suit he wore, belonged. "These men will see justice done at any cost. So lead me to my wife at once."

"Ay, lead us to her," said the elder of the two fishermen, in a gruff voice, "before our father's duckin' as ye like!" Mr. Wilmer turned an affrighted look from the baronet to his sturdy assistants. The former was stripping off the rough suit he wore over his ordinary attire, but his resolute face and flashing eyes were turned toward the baronet, as if he longed for a command to duck him in the neighboring sea.

Mr. Wilmer's cowardly soul quailed within him. "Don't let 'em duck me, Sir Hugh," he begged, in a sobbing voice, all his hopes of wealth and grandeur giving way before his fears of personal suffering. "I will take you to her, and I will see her safe."

He endeavored to rise and lead the way to the dwelling, feeling that a refusal would only subject him to pain and indignity; but his limbs refused to support his weight. "I'll have a groan he fell back on the rocks. "I reckon we'd better help him," said the fisherman who had spoken before. "Just lead a hand, Jim."

The younger fisherman obeyed, stepping forward, intending to assist Mr. Wilmer to walk; but the latter, mistaking their intention, sprang up as if galvanized, protesting that he was quite able to proceed now, and implored Sir Hugh to protect him. "Lead on, then!" said the young baronet, sternly.

Mr. Wilmer proceeded to obey. The fishermen kept on either side of him, and Sir Hugh followed him closely. In this way they proceeded along the shore and toward the house. Upon the beach in front of the dwelling, Mrs. Garson and Mrs. Barrat were standing, discussing the singular phenomenon involved in the appearance of the second boat, and speculating whether it had any connection with themselves or the captive.

Their discussion was terminated by the appearance of Mr. Wilmer, closely guarded, and followed by Sir Hugh Chellis. The ex-governor uttered a shriek and turned to flee, but her retreat was cut off by the younger fisherman. Mrs. Garson stood her ground, and entered into noisy explanations, assertions of her ignorance, and innocence of all wrong, declaring that she had done nothing to injure any law, and she defied any one to prove that she had.

"Peace, woman!" said Sir Hugh, with a gesture commanding silence. "Give me the key to Lady Chellis's room." "Why contain, Mrs. Barrat, has it?" "The ex-governor, after a frightened look at the silent and spiritless Mr. Wilmer, relinquished the key without a word. The young baronet gave a keen glance at the wire-covered window, behind which he distinguished a slender figure, and a pale, lovely face, and then, with the lightness of a boy, he bounded toward the house, entered the open door, and sprang up the stairs, three at a time.

The key, with some difficulty, caused by his eagerness, entered the lock, the bolt was turned, and he opened the door and rushed across the threshold. His young bride was standing near the window, but her face turned towards him. Her countenance was bright and sparkling with joy; her dark eyes were full of love and tenderness; her crimson lips quivered with the sweetest of emotions; and he could invite whom you will to accompany you."

"But Hugh," said the young bride, in a low voice, "I don't want any company but you." The baronet stared and looked at her. Her brilliant beauty was bathed in a soft, rosy flush, like the glow of early sunrise; her eyes, half raised, had a half-frightened expression, and her lips quivered with a tremulous smile.

But she could read there may be guessed at from his subsequent proceedings. The quick blood leaped to his face, boyish face, his countenance grew eager and impassioned, and in a transport of delight he clasped her in his arms, breathing words of endearment and epithets that thrilled her soul.

"You do love me, then?" he whispered. "Yes, Hugh," she answered, "yes, my husband." She spoke the last title in an almost inaudible whisper, and then nestled her head upon his shoulder like a tired child.

It was about ten o'clock when the carriage passed through the village of West Hoxton, which looked so strange and deserted, and advanced swiftly towards Monrepos. As they came near the pretty place they were greeted with a sight that surprised and pleased both.

The house was hung with colored Chinese lanterns all slight and gleaming like hazy eyes from the surrounding foliage. Every window was wide open, revealing the lighted interior. The long and narrow drawing room were uncurtained, and several persons could be seen within, prominent among whom was Miss Dorothy.

"What can all this mean?" said Lady Chellis, looking at the house and then at several groups moving about the lawn. "I cannot comprehend it." Before Sir Hugh, who was himself puzzled, could offer any plausible explanation, the wide gates were flung open for their ad- vance, and the carriage rolled into the grounds they were received with resounding cheers.

"Welcome home, Lady Chellis! welcome home!" was the cry that rang through the air from a score of hearty voices. "Welcome to the home of our daughter!" "If any one had suspected a mystery in Adah's marriage, the mystery was cleared up now, at once and forever. The guests did not protract their stay. They all knew that Lady Chellis must be tired and fatigued, and contented themselves with clasping her hands and offering their congratulations upon her marriage and escape from Mr. Wilmer. And then, having promised to call formally as soon as the baronet returned from the house, they one and all withdrew, their example being followed by the villagers on the lawn.

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